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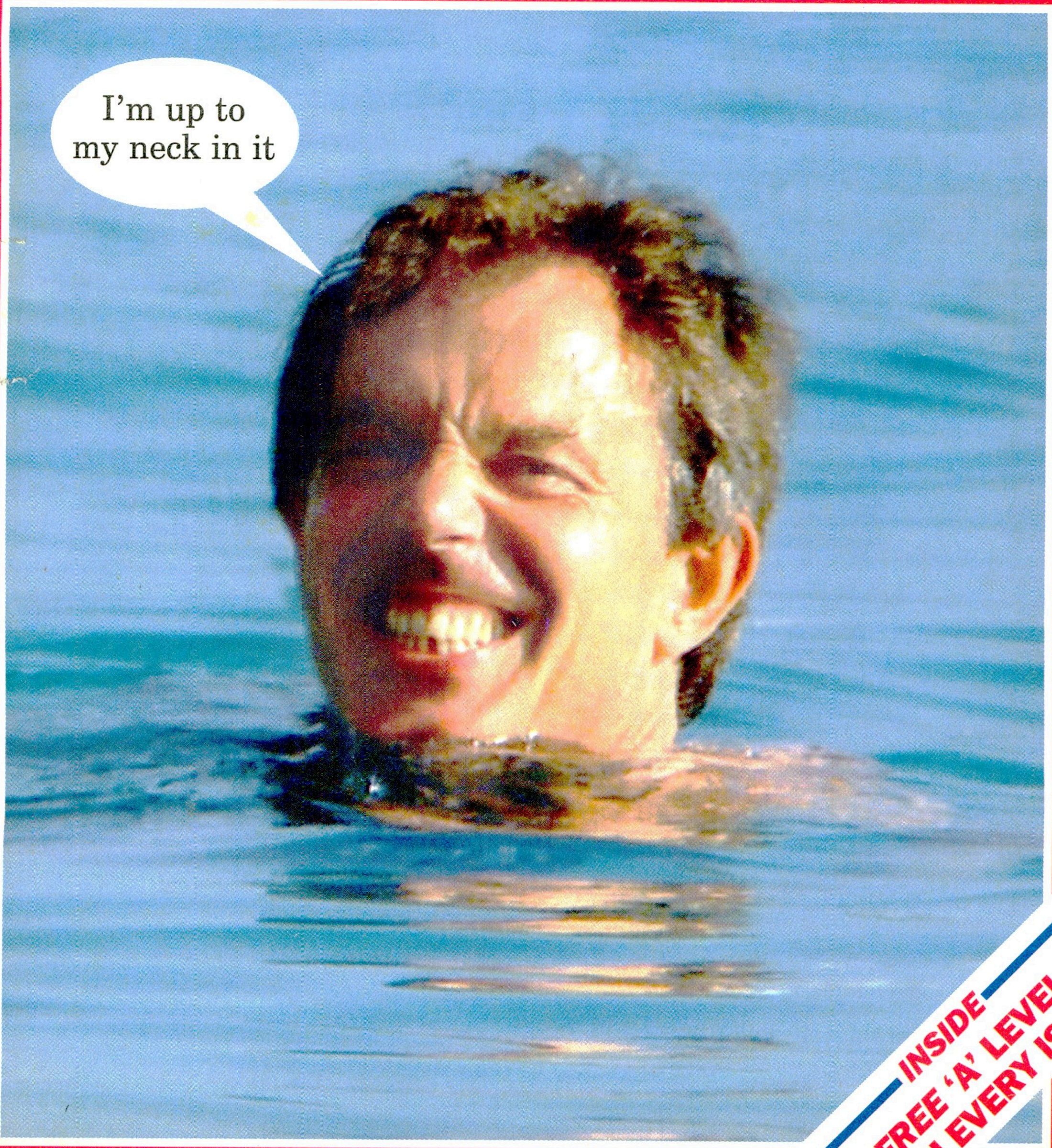

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(cont. p. 118)

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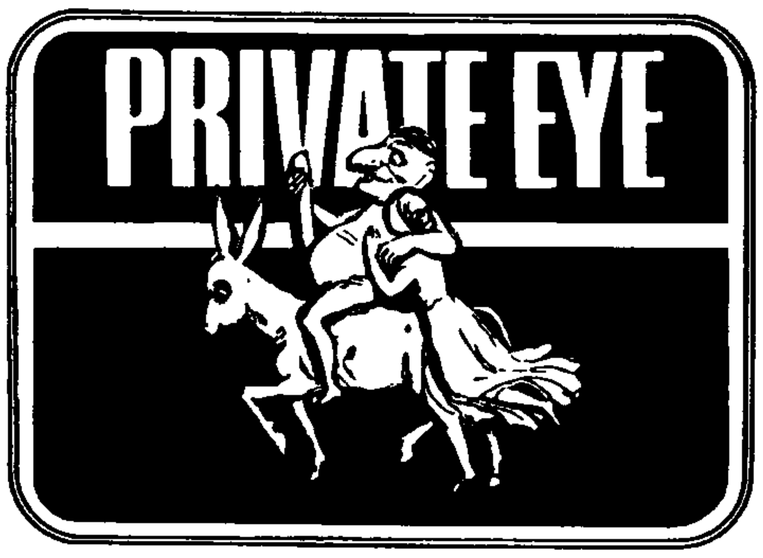

Hutton bothered

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AS the public learns more about the late weapons expert Dr David Kelly, what of his counterpart in the United States, Dr David Kay?

In the hunt for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), Kelly was to have been Britain's man on the Iraq Survey Group, led by his fellow former weapons inspector Dr Kay, who is not a scientist at all.

Kay has a BA from the University of Texas and a PhD in international relations. When he stopped being the UN's chief weapons inspector, he got a job as "corporate senior vice president" at the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), one of America's leading defence contractors. Its board includes a number of former senior military officials, including retired general Wayne Downing, once head of counter-terrorism at the White House.

The Iraqi exiles sent to advise the coalition in Baghdad are actually employees of SAIC. Before the Iraq war, SAIC was employed by the US government to help search for Saddam's WMDs. Bizarrely, SAIC actually built a mobile biological weapons lab. The allies claimed Saddam had such labs too, although none has been found. The Americans built theirs for "training".

Even more bizarrely, the person who helped build these dummy labs, Steven Hatfill, was an employee of SAIC. Hatfill was sacked by SAIC when he was named a "person of interest" by the US justice department in its investigation of the 2001 anthrax letters case – although Hatfill has never been charged with any crime.

None of this strange tale should lessen *Eye* readers' confidence in Kay's recent announcement that Saddam did give an order for chemical shells to be used – even though no such weapon was ever fired or has since been discovered.

ON 9 August, the big accountancy firm KPMG published a stern public warning that not enough people are saving for their old age.

Only five percent of workers, the accountants warned, pay more than 10 percent of their earnings into a pension scheme and as a result a lot of schemes are careering into deficit.

Two days later (11 Aug) came the sad news of just such a disaster. Aon Trust Corporation got a valuation for the pension fund of one of its biggest clients, for whose pension fund Aon acts as trustees. The valuation showed a deficit last year of some £65m. An anxious letter to the workers involved revealed that it was "most probable" that benefits from the pension fund would have to be cut.

The name of the unfortunate client? Er, KPMG.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"It's not being a parent I object to, merely talking about it incessantly. So I'm going to follow my publisher's advice and stay silent on the subject. This is the last time I'm ever going to write about it – I promise."

— Toby Young, *Guardian*, 22 March 2003.

"In the first of his weekly columns on new parenthood, former bad boy Toby Young is for once, on the receiving end of projectile vomiting."

— *Evening Standard*, 6 August 2003.

THE ban on British Airways flights to and from Saudi Arabia is a sharp reminder of the terrorist danger posed by that country.

It will give a further boost to the activities of the energetic US law firm Motley Rice, who, on behalf of 600 victims of the atrocities in New York and Washington in September 2001, are suing 200 mainly Saudi individuals for a trillion dollars damages.

Many of those sued are rich and famous – they include Prince Turki, the current Saudi ambassador in Britain – but the most worrying name on the list for President George W. Bush is that of a billionaire called Khalid Bin Mahfouz.

Mahfouz, a former major shareholder in the corrupt and bankrupt bank BCCI, shared business interests with George Bush in the latter's complex and rarely publicised sorties into the Texas oil business in the 1980s and early 1990s. The failure of the US media to investigate this connection became all the more surprising after Bush's remarkable decision to censor the results of the recent congressional hearings into the 9/11 bombings. Twenty-eight pages of congress's 900-page report were "blanked out".

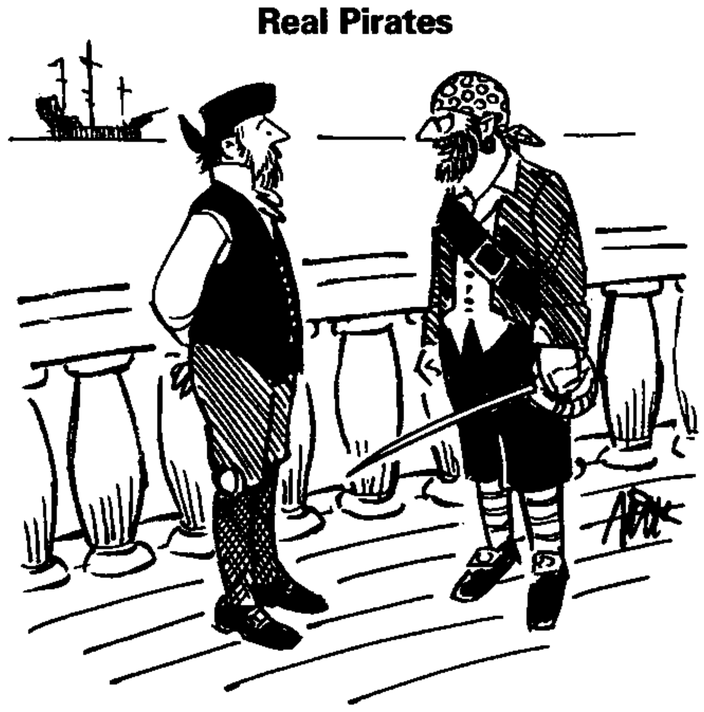
"If people are being investigated," explained the president, "it doesn't make sense to let them know who are." A more relevant way of putting the point might be that if people who had business connections with leading US politicians are being investigated, it doesn't make sense to publish their names either.

Top Saudis are just as anxious to keep these matters as far as possible from the public gaze. When the connection between Bush and Mahfouz was mentioned on an obscure website earlier this year, the site promoters got a furious letter from Mahfouz's lawyer, Cherif Sedky, demanding the item's withdrawal.

Mr Sedky's letter, however, did not object to the revelation of former business connections between Mahfouz and George W. Bush. A recent authoritative article in the *Financial Times* (13 Aug) arguing that the recent war in Iraq was staged to make it easier for the Americans to withdraw from Saudi Arabia, was not so shy. It included this passage: "The Saudis purchase Washington influence through consultancy contracts, big defence outlays on US military hardware, lucrative speeches for Washington insiders, investments in US businesses with influential figures, and the like. A long line of US senior officials has benefited, with the Ford, George HW Bush and George W Bush White House and Pentagon at the front of the line."

"Tests were much harder in my day"

Real Pirates



"We're going to download all your sea shanties without paying"

NEWS

THE lord chancellor has recently published a consultation paper indicating that the QC system will be scrapped unless the Bar can justify retaining it.

The Bar Council, while resisting attempts by barristers to hold a ballot on the subject, is nevertheless keen to discover their views – as proved by the magnificently objective and indeed judicious questionnaire which it has now circulated to all chambers.

As every trainee lawyer knows, counsel are not meant to ask leading questions. But it seems that different rules apply to legal opinion surveys: "Barristers are professionals and do more than provide services to their clients; justice is more than a commodity. Do you agree advocates perform an important public function?"; "Do you agree the rank of Silk gives recognition to the public nature of the role, and to the importance of maintaining those standards?"; "Do you agree Silk drives up aspirations and standards, and is pro-competitive?"; "Do you agree Silk is a key badge of quality, and is still of great utility?"

And so to the final question: "In the light of the material provided, do you favour the retention of a system of senior counsel?" Quite why the Bar Council think it necessary to print a box for "No" as well as "Yes" is a mystery.

BRITISH Airways' glossy new *2003 Social and Environmental Report* paints a pretty picture of the airline building schools in Zambia and muffling aircraft noise so London residents can sleep at night.

And the airline proudly announces that it has introduced a new "standing instruction" on bribery and corruption. "We believe these policies are well understood and followed through the company," notes the report.

This spirit of corporate social responsibility does not appear to have reached Air Mauritius in which British Airways Associated Companies Ltd holds a one-tenth share.

In late 2001 the airline's chairman Sir Harry Tirvengadum was arrested on suspicion of having embezzled 85m rupees (£2.2m) over a 20-year period and was forced to resign. Earlier this year, the firm's general finance manage Gerard Tyack was jailed for three years for his part in the affair. During the case, allegations emerged that the airline maintained an illegal slush fund, siphoned from airline profits, to help finance the election campaigns and travel expenses of certain political parties.

Proceedings against Tirvengadum are currently making their way through the courts in Mauritius.

The links between BA and Air Mauritius go further than simple shareholding. BA's long-time leading legal counsel Robert Webb QC was appointed a director of Air Mauritius in 2000. It might be time to send that policy document to some of the firms in which BA holds shares.

STREET OF SHAME

EVERY Murdoch editor knows that the quickest way to the boss's heart is to put the boot into the BBC.

Which explains why Rebekah "I'm no Blair Poodle" Wade's *Sun* has poured so much vitriol over the occupants of Broadcasting House. The supposedly fearless Trevor Kavanagh glosses over No 10's flagrant manipulation of intelligence documents and increasingly reads as if he has been taking dictation from Alastair Campbell: "Downing Street was dramatically cleared last night of 'sexing up' a dossier on Iraqi arms." No it wasn't. "As the *Sun* revealed at the height of the row, the BBC was near meltdown." Oh yeah?

Elsewhere, Wade's leader column also echoes to the sound of Her Master's Voice. After BBC journalist Andrew Gilligan's appearance before Hutton, for example, she raged: "How could Gilligan hold such a crucial and sensitive role at the heart of the BBC's news gathering operation? The notes he took during his three vital discussions with Dr Kelly were garbled and woefully thin on detail. The most junior reporter on a weekly freesheet would have done better than that… How ludicrous that so much time, effort and money is being wasted on the dismal efforts of a second-rate hack."

Ouch! Happily there's nothing second rate about Rebekah's record at the helm of first the *News of the World* and then the *Sun*. Third rate is more like it. Here's a selection:

Summer 2000: Launches the *News of the World*'s Name and Shame war on paedophiles. Critics claim the campaign has the opposite effect to that intended by driving child abusers underground. A year later, the *Screws* pays more than £20,000 compensation to two men with the same names as paedophiles identified in the paper.

March 2003: Forced to print an apology to David Gazely after the *Sun* mistakenly prints a photo of him with the caption: "Face of Kid Ban Pervert."

June 2003: Severely censured by a high court judge after it emerges that the *Screws* had paid £10,000 to a witness in the notorious Beckham non-kidnap sting. The disclosure about the payment forces the crown prosecution service to abandon the trial.

July 2003: Publishes photos of footballer Marc-Vivien Foé in his last throes. More than 400 complaints pour in from sickened *Sun* readers.

JUST FANCY THAT!

The Wages of Sin: Why are scandal and humiliation so well rewarded in modern Britain?
— *Daily Mail*, 2 August, p. 20-21

An exclusive interview with Jonathan Aitken and his new wife
— *Daily Mail*, 2 August, p. 40-41

WRITING in the *Daily Mail*, Stephen Glover inveighed against "this insidious attack on trusted BBC". Glover ought to be able to recognize an insidious attack on the BBC when he sees one since he's penned a few of his own of late.

From August to October he wrote a series of columns attacking the corporation. "Blatant bias – and the BBC will live to regret it" began one. In another: "Why the BBC is doomed… The BBC has intimate relations with the Government. Mr Dyke, after all, helped to bankroll Tony Blair's election as leader of the Labour Party. Gavyn Davies, the corporation's chairman, is a New Labour stooge." Not such a stooge now, apparently.

WHILE others were concluding that Andrew Gilligan's credibility had been substantially undermined by his appearance in the witness box, the *Independent*'s Paul Vallely could hardly contain his admiration for the Radio 4 hack's performance.

"What came across was a journalist of considerable diligence… Where the previous day's civil service witnesses had held back, the BBC journalist was positively garrulous… Where his evidence conflicted with that of the deceased scientist, he went out of his way to be gracious, taking care not to accuse Dr Kelly of lying but saying things like 'perhaps he might have been thinking of someone else'." Vallely even found it "disarming" when Gilligan admitted that his report had contained inaccuracies.

For the *Independent* hack, the clincher was when "Susan Watts took over and read out her extraordinary implicit confirmation of Gilligan's central claim." So it must have come as a quite shock to Vallely when the very next day Watts strove to put as much distance between herself and Gilligan as possible.

Of course his eagerness to give the BBC man a break can have had nothing to do with the fact that his wife is a colleague of Gilligan's on the *Today* programme, the target of so much government venom. (The *Indie* also employed Gilligan for a brief period in 1994, though it doesn't seem terribly keen on advertising the fact).

JUST FANCY THAT!

It's annoyed me more than once to see Caplin belittlingly described in the media as 'a former topless model'...
— Barbara Ellen, *The Observer Review*, 3 August, p. 2

Caplin, a former topless model...
— *The Observer*, 3 August, p. 11

TRIGGER-HAPPY Norfolk farmer Tony Martin is believed to have received £125,000 from Piers Moron's *Mirror* for exclusive rights to his story – equivalent to £25,000 for each of the five years of his prison sentence.

This has been food for thought for Trinity Mirror journalists on the company's regional titles. Junior reporters start on less than half that at some of TM's paid-for titles. Put another way, using "inappropriate force" to remove Moron from one's property would pay better than joining TM as a graduate. The benefits of such an action to journalism in general would also be considerable.

PS: Trinity Mirror has announced an impending 550 redundancies to raise profits by £25m a year, and in January this year closed its final salary pension scheme to new employees. Thankfully the company can still find the cash to pay convicted killers and former royal butlers considerably more than a penny for their thoughts in an attempt to prop up the *Moron*'s dismal sales.

AS everyone knows – and Richard Desmond's lawyers keep reminding them – John Leslie told the story of his arrest and acquittal exclusively to the *Express* for £550,000.

So readers may have been intrigued by the cover of gossip-mag *heat* on 9 August, which promised in large type: "JOHN LESLIE: The first interview."

Naturally, this didn't in any way imply that there was an interview with John Leslie inside. Instead, the cover line was trailing a brief report on how Leslie had decided to, er, give an interview to someone else.

The magazine was strangely coy about whom. All hackette Jo Carnegie could tell her eager readers was this: "One thing is for sure – he is determined to finally put his side of the saga across."

Number crunchings

£1.5m

■ Cash made available for counselling services for 1,400 HSBC staff made redundant

£2.5m

■ Cash made available for guaranteed bonuses for one HSC director recruited

IF Richard Desmond isn't careful, people may begin to wonder what information Mohamed Fayed has on him to explain the willingness of the *Express* titles to keep running conspiracy theories about Princess Diana's death.

The latest rehash by dire ex-*Mirror* hack Nicholas Sneaky Davies was given a front page puff – "DIANA: Fury over shocking new book about the night she died" – on last Friday's front page, together with a full page inside dominated by a photo of the princess and the headline: Killed by the secret service.

Two further pages followed on Saturday, and another pair on Monday. None of the claims are new, but one interesting fact about Fayed's obsession with proving that MI5 bumped off Di and his son Dodi was related in passing at the bottom of Friday's "news" story: "In November, a judicial review in Edinburgh, where [Fayed] has a country estate, will deal with the latest stage of his battle."

Actually Balnagown Estate is in Ross-shire, which is nowhere near Edinburgh. But Fayed's attempt to get the Scottish courts involved, having been rebuffed in England, France and America, is based on his residence in Balnagown. Yet earlier this year, Fayed made it clear that he'd left the United Kingdom for tax reasons. So how will the Inland Revenue react now that Fayed claims to be a Swiss resident for tax purposes, but a Scottish one when seeking a judicial review? Could it end up costing him money?

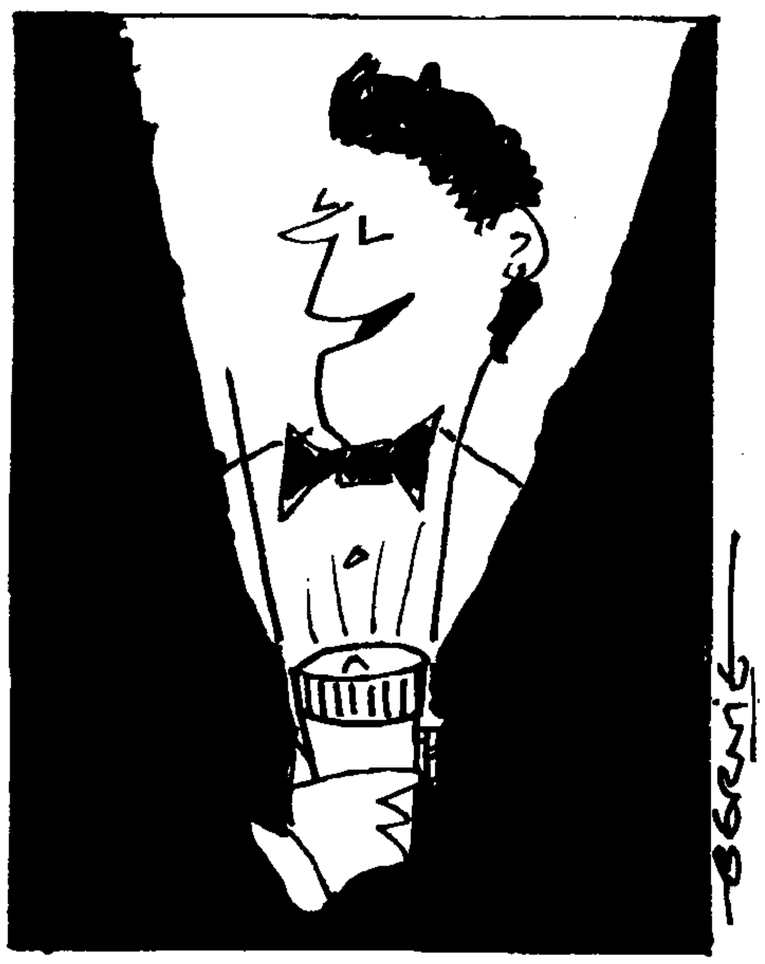
THE *Express* serialisation will certainly help Davies's latest Diana publicity campaign. As he told the *Irish Independent*: "It is important to examine her death... It is only with books like this that the truth begins to emerge."

It's certainly important for a scribbler like Davies, constant "updating" being a feature of his oeuvre. The latest Di-book follows on from *Diana: A Princess and Her Troubled Marriage* (Bantam 1993); *Diana: The Lonely Princess* (Carol Publishing 1996): *Princess Diana - Secrets and Lies* (AMI Books 2003); *The Princess Who Changed the World* (Blake 1998); and *Diana: The People's Princess* (Citadel 1998).

Similarly, her son has inspired *William – the Man Who Will Be King* (Blake 1998); *William: The Inside Story of the Man Who Will Be King* (St Martins Press 1999); *William: King for the 21st Century* (Blake 2000); and *William: The Rebel Prince* (Blake 2001).

Not forgetting *Queen Elizabeth II: a Woman Who Is Not Amused* (Birch Lane Press, 1994); *Queen Elizabeth II* (Citadel Press 1998) and *Elizabeth: Behind Palace Doors* (Mainstream 2000).

Most memorable of all though were the upbeat *The Unknown Maxwell: His Astonishing Secret Lives Revealed by His Aide and Close Companion* (Sidgwick & Jackson, November, 1992) – and then the salacious *Death of a Tycoon: An Insider's Account of the Rise and Fall of Robert Maxwell* (St Martins Press May, 1993) after it became somewhat unfashionable to claim to have been a friend of Cap'n Bob.



New York Torch Singer

HACKWATCH

Augusts of hot air

IT'S been unbearable, hasn't it? Too much. As a nation we're wilting under the onslaught. But thankfully the silly season is nearly over and the slew of inane pieces about food porn and monster mosquitoes hell is drawing to a close. The heatwave might pass soon, too. The perfect time, then, to remember how we've suffered at the hands of Phil Space and chums in the last few weeks.

Top marks for innovation in spurious space-filling go to Andrew Roberts in the *Mail*, for a brilliantly silly piece claiming that the silly season is actually rather serious. "Though it has become an institution, I believe the very notion of the silly season is, well, silly. Because, far from being the dullest of months, August through history has proved to be one of the most momentous." Readers were then treated to 2,000 words on historical events that took place in August, Roberts carefully stepping over those that didn't.

If the silly season isn't really silly, there's been little to bear this out in Robert's own newspaper. August in the *Mail* has seen articles on "How to Cool Down with Water" (eg "Have a Bath") a double-page spread on guessing celebrity babies and the exclusive news that Lulu has spat out some chewing gum. The *Mail* has the gum.

Meanwhile, though the heat has led to virtual meltdown in most of the country, on the Street of Shame it has been the salvation for hacks lacking inspiration. Top prize for variations on the theme "Isn't it hot?" goes to Max Hastings, for his unforgettable article, also in the *Mail*, entitled "I'm warming to the heatwave (but then I have got a pool)." "You would be amazed at how popular that rectangle of water makes us," says Hastings. But probably not with *Mail* readers holed up in bungalows.

The *Telegraph* has clearly put its best brains to addressing the August news-vacuum, because the resulting space-filler is so ill-conceived it is almost unintelligible. "Tatworld" – a "summer series on Tabloid culture" – is written by Christopher Howse. From the outset this is somewhat incongruous: anyone who has had even the most passing acquaintance with his fecund beard will know that he is no go-getting hackette.

Anyway, every day an entire news page is given over to a flabby spoof of the celebrity press. It assumes that the *Telegraph* is above this sort of thing, but regular readers will know that when Liz Hurley wears a mini-skirt or Nigella sucks on a strawberry, Charles Moore is not averse to a touch of tat himself. Recent Tatworlds have contained pictures of Kylie's rear, Posh Spice in a singlet and J-Lo's cleavage. The copy is meant to give the pics an ironic gloss, but Howse's semi-deranged verbiage would have been better left inside his head – sample "Jolly Rogering Jordan can have me as loblolly-boy in her orlop any day."

Not that Tatworld has been the *Telegraph*'s only concession to desperation. Pick of its silly season scoops has been the revelation that economics editor George Trefgarne was once a fag for none other than Lance Gerrard-Wright, aka Ulrika Jonsson's husband to be. What was Lance like at school? He was a nice chap. He liked knives. And you can be sure no one knows "Mr Right" better than George – "I haven't seen Lance for years, but I wish him and Ulrika well."

Meanwhile, in the *Guardian,* David Aaronovitch deserves credit for kick-starting the great air-conditioning debate. Noting firstly that he is a terrifically sweaty man ("Just the act of typing those two sentences has brought a steady stream of sweat from my forehead and scalp") he then wrings out 750 words on whether air-conditioning is "really worth it". Presumably such exertion renders him loopy, as about half way through he suddenly lurches into a spume of oddball statistics, which are, he claims, to do with "assessment of risk and opportunity costs". These vary from the number of articles in the US written about the West Nile virus to the question of how dangerous Britain's rivers really are. His conclusion? "I can cope." What a shame. Think what we might have been spared if he had temporarily expired.

For sheer gall however, none of these can compete with "The great G2 ice cream giveaway" in which ice creams were, er, given away. We wouldn't want to spoil it for you by revealing whether or not small children accepted free ice-cream when it was offered them. But for clues as to why the *Guardian* would give a cover story to a damp squib, look for the Walls ice-cream logos prominent in every picture.

THE *Express* has been making great play of "the most amazing newspaper offer ever" – a free aerial photograph, allegedly worth £24.95.

"In an incredible project, every house in the country has been photographed from the air. Now YOU can have a superb quality aerial photo of YOUR home ABSOLUTELY FREE." If you collect the tokens, that is.

Alas, "every house" turns out to mean every home in England and most of Wales. *Express* readers in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, the Isle of Man and Channel Islands were therefore not supposed to be told about the "the most amazing newspaper offer ever".

Unfortunately, due to massive staff cuts, pages sent to printing plants on the Celtic fringe carried details of the offer on their front pages, but no information inside. This is a very effective way to alienate readers, especially since the *Daily Mail*'s similar spoiler promotion included the whole the British Isles.

THE *Sun*, most of whose hacks think Liberia is a form of food poisoning, has not been known in the past for its foreign news coverage.

So it was refreshing on 13 August to find a news item on page 4 about a charity appeal to help the citizens of that war-torn African republic.

The mystery of the unlikely feature, however, was soon cleared up. The name of the TV actor fronting the appeal? Ross Kemp, aka Mr Rebekah Wade.

THE *Guardian* didn't hesitate to have a go at the *Daily Mail* for managing to shoehorn its political agenda into a piece about the hot weather.

As the *Mail*-hating broadsheet noted on page 5: "'Parts of the country touched 30C (86F) yesterday'," it [the *Mail*] notes, 'making it warmer than Barbados where Tony Blair and his family are on holiday...' Let. It. Go."

But what was this on page 5 of the very same *Guardian*? "Warm air from France where temperatures were reaching the mid-30s, combined with high pressure and southerly winds, means the heatwave could last into the weekend and early next week – keeping temperatures above Barbados, where Tony Blair is on holiday."

DEFINITE signs of grassroots activity at Hammersmith & Fulham Conservative Association, following an address from party elder statesman Douglas Hurd.

Hurd's inspirational speech left two middle-aged members so overwhelmed that immediately after the former foreign secretary had left they could be seen vigorously consummating their passion up against a lamppost in the street.

Their urgency was possibly due to the fact that they are married but not to each other. But Hurd still deserves recognition for turning a speech which included powerfully soporific references to EU cod quotas into pure rhetorical Viagra.

The incident did not end there. The local party hack involved is also engaged in Ugandan discussions with another female association member who is not his wife either. Increasingly frank and obscene rows between the two women have now ground association meetings to a halt. Their lover sent them both explicit "erotic" emails which have been wielded as weapons of war. "He wants me to dress up in my check dress and then to wank all over me," shouted one shrilly.

One innocent Conservative councillor who tried to mediate found himself accidentally locked in the town hall with both women instead. As their row escalated he placed increasingly desperate phone calls for help to a friend with a key. "You've got to come and get me," he whispered down the phone. "I'm locked in the town hall with two mad women who are about to kill each other."

Who said Conservatism was dead?

IDS
Roof Repairs
Also Gutters Cleaned & Sealed or Replaced
Wharfe Valley Times

PLAID CYMRU continues to fall apart thanks to the racist remarks of the Welsh language folk singer Dafydd Iwan who is bidding to become the party's president (*Eye* 1086).

He told the faithful at this year's National Eisteddfod in Powys that English families were moving into Wales to get away from Indians and Pakistanis. "They're coming to Wales to avoid immigration," lamented the former chairman of the Welsh Language Society whose activities, such as tearing down English-only road signs, once earned him a spell in prison.

Once in residence west of Offa's Dyke, he said, the English "in-comers" threatened Welsh culture and the language spoken by one in five of the three million already living there.

Iwan quickly won the BNP's seal of approval with chairman Nick Griffin declaring warmly that his outfit had exactly that in mind when it started the "white flight" from multicultural cities campaign.

The outburst by the would-be king of Plaid Cymru (aka Plaid Crumbly) will not be laid to rest as quickly as memories of the late Dr Phil Williams, the favoured candidate for the presidential poisoned chalice who died in a Cardiff massage parlour before the contest was called.

The Bardic Circle (Corsedd of Bards) posthumously admitted Dr Williams to its ranks – an honour without precedent in the organisation's long history.

THE government is paying a firm run by former Tory minister Lord Crickhowell £83m to run its computerised spin machine.

The cabinet office's Knowledge Network gives ministers, civil servants and press officers the "most up to date key messages". It's widely seen as a spin-doctoring tool, modelled on Labour's electoral system, ensuring that the whole government machine gives Dalek-like responses to all inquiries.

At the end of July cabinet office minister Douglas Alexander announced that the network, which is expanding to bring all government departments into the cabinet office's computerised web, will be run by ITnet, chaired by Lord Crickhowell.

ITnet's biggest claim to public sector fame thus far is the disastrous way it has handled contracts to run housing benefit payments in Hackney and Islington. Residents in both boroughs have faced painful delays in receiving benefits, while the councils were hurt by the costs: Islington had to pay £2m to Itnet just to make it go away.

Nevertheless it remains a favourite of the government: Itnet chief exec Bridget Blow has a place on two government committees: both the court of the Bank of England and the Industrial Development Advisory Board.

LAST MONTH home secretary David Blunkett's department issued its blueprint for a better deal from the criminal justice system for victims and witnesses.

"Crime can leave victims physically injured, emotionally traumatised, frightened and with potentially long-lasting psychological trauma, all of which can be compounded by severe financial difficulties," said the report.

So why are officials working on plans to dramatically reduce the £160m a year criminal injuries compensation scheme? Last week a leaked memo suggested Blunkett was considering handing the scheme to a private company to run, and that home owners and motorists will pay extra on their insurance policies to help fund it.

Insiders suggest his plans are even more radical and that anyone injured in the course of their work will now be excluded. This would affect teachers, police, doctors and nurses and put the compensation burden on their employers. Wholesale removal of the two biggest current categories of compensation – for loss of earnings and care costs – is also possible.

Putting the onus on employers and insurance companies will only make a victim's struggle for compensation even more difficult. Brilliant!

NIGEL CRISP, head of the NHS, has put the American director of a clapped-out privatisation firm in charge of Tony Blair's new "fast track" hospitals.

Ken Anderson, Texan-born development director of Amey, a PFI specialist that announced £130m losses this year, is the new commercial director of the NHS in charge of diagnostic and treatment centres. Amey's financial difficulties led to half the board resigning and a takeover by a Spanish builder, none of which mattered to Anderson with his comfortable new NHS berth.

His new job consists of tempting more private firms to run the new fast-track hospitals, a centrepiece of the government's health reforms. *Private Eye*'s sources say Anderson is appointing other ex-Amey people to work with him in the NHS, hiring two leading directors. These ex-Amey bods complain about their NHS accommodation – Hannibal House in London's less than glamorous Elephant & Castle – and are looking for swanky new offices in the West End paid for by the taxpayer.

The department of health said its staff came from "a variety of different backgrounds" and refused to confirm or deny any of Anderson's appointments. They even refused to confirm that Anderson came to the NHS from Amey, even though this is a matter of public record.

The search for private firms to run the new hospitals culminated in a swanky West End hotel reception where witnesses claim the Texan-born Anderson told assembled businessmen: "When I was in the US the best Republican president we ever had was Clinton. Over here the best Tory you have is Tony Blair."

The drive to bring more companies into the NHS also included a glittering reception at the US embassy. The DoH told the *Eye* this event was organised by the US as a "trade mission for health firms", although it accepted that "a number of NHS officials did attend the event".

IT appears that "business solutions" firm QinetiQ is looking to offload its disastrous contract with the public records office to run the 1901 census website, which was launched in January 2002 and was promptly swamped by family historians.

The site collapsed and was taken down. It was six months before the problems were resolved, although the site has now dealt with more than 45m searches.

The national audit office (NAO) has investigated the debacle and is due to report in the autumn. It has looked into the planning and financing of the scheme, as well as the marketing of the website and the way problems were handled.

Asked whether QinetiQ was looking to end its involvement with the PRO, a spokesman said: "QinetiQ's business is in developing technological capability. As with any organisation wanting to optimise business performance, QinetiQ is currently reviewing the long term management of the 1901 Census project." Which sounded like a 'yes'. He insisted that the NAO report had no bearing on the review.

In fact QinetiQ's business seems to become more wide-ranging by the week. As well as the defence contract under which the firm managed to lose a pallet-load of live tank missiles in the Bristol channel (*Eyes passim*), it is currently working on security systems, medical technology and "people living on the moon" according to its publicity.

At the most recent meeting of the National Archives Online Advisory Panel, historians and archivists were making an early start on discussing how they will deal with the 1911 census, due for release in 2012. It's fair to say they'll be looking to learn some lessons about choosing successful contractors from the NAO report.

Number crunching

+300%

■ Increase in spending on pilot scheme into alternative voting methods in last local elections

-10%

■ Decrease in turn-out

"At least he knows his grass from his elbow"

SWEET CHARIDEE

WHEN liquidators descend on Open Air Fundraising – one of those companies whose staff stop you in the street to ask for direct debit donations to charity – they will find slim pickings for creditors who are owed about £1.8m.

Chris Coleridge and Andy Holliday, the directors, have just sold the assets and business (though not the liabilities) to Open Air Global, whose directors are, er, Chris Coleridge and Andy Holliday. Coleridge refused to say how much he and Holliday paid themselves, citing commercial confidentiality. But that secret sum, believed to be not much more than £100,000, will be all there is for unhappy creditors.

Open Air got into financial difficulty last year, owing large sums to charities and others, including the Inland Revenue (Barnados £156,000, and Shelter £126,000, etc). In September it entered a company voluntary agreement to pay off its debts in half-yearly chunks, staggered over six years. But it failed to make its minimum payment of £181,500 due in June citing adverse publicity and a downturn in the market. Last month it asked creditors to extend the terms of the agreement.

Although most charities and those owed smaller sums were prepared to accept Open Air's offer, the Inland Revenue, the largest creditor owed more than £1m, and Barnados and Shelter voted against. An attempt to buy the company more breathing space through a high court administration order also failed.

Thus Holliday and Coleridge embarked on their "Pheonix" deal, which is entirely legit providing they can prove they paid a fair price for the assets. They maintain that this ensures that 720 staff keep their jobs and that the charities – at least – will eventually recover their money. The pair have promised to pay half of all profits from Open Air Global into a trust – operated independently of them – which will reimburse all its charity creditors.

Not surprisingly those supervising the company voluntary arrangement and some creditors are unhappy about Open Air's directors' unorthodox way of doing business. A letter to creditors from Begbies Traynor, the corporate rescue firm supervising the voluntary arrangement, sets out reasons for seeking Open Air's compulsory liquidation. It cites the transfer of the business to Open Air Global and the failure of Coleridge and Holliday to respond adequately to requests for information about the deal.

It also cites the failure of the directors to conduct the company's business on a "normal" basis. This no doubt relates to – among other things – the fact that between 1998 and 2001 Open Air was paying its then two shareholders dividends of some £367,400 out of non-existent reserves. One of those was Coleridge, who has pledged to return his dividends in £50,000 chunks.

But he told the *Eye*: "Surely it is better that the Inland Revenue gets something and the charities eventually get everything because we are able to continue to operate rather than we go bust and no one gets paid and many people lose their jobs."

He said he and Holliday had taken over the running of the business when it was in serious trouble last year and had now managed to turn it round and that the majority of the charity creditors were happy with the arrangement. Not so the Inland Revenue and bigger creditors.

CHARITY EXTRA: Following revelations in the *News of the World* that footballer John Fashanu had agreed to fix charity football matches in exchange for large sums of cash, "Fash" was politely asked by organizers of another charity tournament in South Wales to withdraw his services.

But who could they draft in to replace him at the last moment? Step forward former Man Utd pro Mickey Thomas. Was this appropriate? Back in 1993 he spent nine months in jail for passing forged bank notes to apprentices during his time at Wrexham. A charitable soul indeed!

HOW PFI WORKS

"AN exciting and vibrant opportunity" was the way promoters of the Paddington Health Campus scheme puffed their proposal on 24 July. *Whoops!* Only days later, a host of newspapers published the amazing information that the cost of the PFI scheme – to fuse the Harefield Hospital and the Royal Brompton – has risen from £360m (the last published estimate) to £800m.

Even worse, the project has not yet got planning permission, 90 percent of Harefield staff don't want to move to London, and London Health Emergency has been leaked figures to prove that even if the new hospital is built, running costs will be £43m a year more than expected, hopelessly squeezing primary care, community and mental health services.

Hammersmith and Fulham Primary Care Trust (whose new director of clinical services, Anne Eden, used to work for St Mary's hospital, Paddington) is not at all happy about the Paddington Campus. So how can it possibly survive?

One answer can be found in the long, prestigious list of expensive "external advisers" already clustering like parasites around the Paddington project: accountants PriceWaterhouseCoopers; lawyers Berwin Leighton Paisner; consortia advisers Integrated Building Services; quantity surveyors David Langton & Everest; architects Sheppard Robinson and Tangram; clinical planners Secta; town planners GL Hearn; equipment providers, Unitec.

With such "advisers" united to keep the project afloat, how can it possibly be stopped even if it costs three times what anyone predicted?

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Ibiza – the new Saint Tropez." — Lisa Armstrong, the *Times*.

"In Food, Spain is the New France." — Julia Turner, *New York Times Magazine*.

"Is Croatia really the new Côte d'Azur?" — Headline in the *Sunday Telegraph*.

"Dubrovnik, apparently, is the new Guildford." — Rod Liddle, *Sunday Times*.

"Croatia emerges as the new Tuscany." — Headline in the *Daily Telegraph*.

STAFF at the south London Atkinson Morley neurology hospital were due to move into their brand new PFI hospital building last month, when it emerged that the building's structure was unsuitable for the essential MRI scanners.

The Atkinson Morley Hospital, currently in Wimbledon, was to move into a new £50m wing on the St George's Hospital site in Tooting, as was the cardio-thoracic service, currently operating out of unsuitable Victorian buildings at the Tooting site.

The hospital's trust refused to move in until contractor The Canmore Partnership Ltd (a consortium including construction firm Gleeson), sorted the problems out. Morag Bogie, project director for the new wing, said: "The problem centres around the building which houses the MRI scanner. As this is a problem involving the structure of the building the contractors are at fault and will be penalised. There will be no additional cost to the NHS."

The hospital has denied the problem was caused by the use of structural steel in the scanner housing, as rumoured among staff.

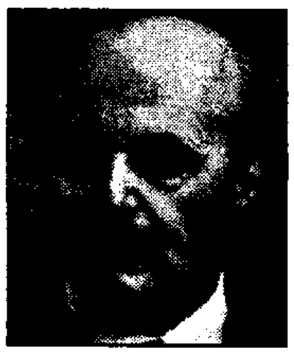
The delay has created serious problems. With the move so imminent, a variety of contracts, such as cleaning and security, had been timed to finish this month. People given outpatients appointments in the past few weeks had been told to go to the new site and have had to be tracked down and told to go to the old site.

100 Years Ago

Who killed Calvi?

WHEN the body of "God's banker" Roberto Calvi was found hanging from scaffolding under London's Blackfriars Bridge 20 years ago, the authorities were very quick to assure a sceptical public that he had killed himself.

An inquest, hurriedly arranged, thankfully accepted the assurances of Chief Inspector John "Goofy" White of the City of London police that suicide was the obvious verdict. That verdict, however, did not satisfy the banker's family and, after a storm of legal protest, a new inquest was arranged.



Roberto Calvi

Goofy White (he got his nickname from his close physical resemblance to the cartoon character) was equally sure about the suicide but the jury was not convinced. It recorded an open verdict. The balance of received journalistic and financial opinion stayed in favour of suicide.

An exception was the *Eye* which argued from the outset that Calvi's death had all the hallmarks of a ritual murder. The first issue of the *Eye* after the body was found (536) pointed to the embarrassing connections between the dead banker, the Mafia-dominated masonic lodge P2, the Vatican and corrupt Italian politicians like Giulio Andreotti (conservative) and Bettino Craxi (socialist).

In July 1983, immediately after the second inquest, the *Eye* went into some detail about the curious official account of Calvi's death. "He suffered from vertigo, but had still been able, after walking unobserved for four miles down the Thames, to go 20ft down a ladder from the pavement under Blackfriars Bridge to the water's edge, to jump on to a plank at the bottom of some scaffolding, to mount the scaffolding to a place where he could attach a noose to one end and his neck to the other and then hurl himself towards the water and his death. This would have been an astonishing achievement at the best of times, but Mr Calvi managed to do it with a hefty brick in both his pockets and, most amazingly of all, with another brick shoved down his flies." The bricks (significant symbols of freemasonry) had been collected from a neighbouring building site. And there were plenty of other masonic symbols on the scene (arch, ladder etc).

The notorious P2 masonic lodge called themselves the "fratelli neri", and dressed up in black cloaks as though they were black friars. Moreover, the deputy president of the Ambrosiano Bank, Roberto Rosone, had been shot at a few weeks previously and Calvi's own secretary was found dead at the bottom of her office block a few days before her boss's mysterious demise.

None of these coincidences hampered the investigations of the City of London police. But the *Eye*'s doubts about the suicide theory persisted through the years as more and more new evidence was uncovered. The *Eye* noted in particular the disappearance of more than a billion dollars from the Ambrosiano bank, and the curious decision of the Vatican bank to "pay back" to Ambrosiano creditors a quarter of a million dollars it never admitted having misspent.

The "mystery" lasted long enough for everyone to forget about it, but last year a forensic investigation by top Italian scientists concluded that the suicide theory was impossible, and now, almost exactly 20 years after his death, prosecutors in Rome have concluded that Calvi was murdered by the Mafia to protect their corrupt secrets in the bank, and that Calvi's connections to top Italian politicians, police chiefs and Mafia gangsters were all relevant to his death.

TV

House Trapped (C4); Every Home Should Have One (BBC2); How I Made My Property Fortune (BBC2); Other People's Houses (C4)

SOME channel controllers have started to theme certain nights of the week: Friday night is Comedy Night on BBC1, for example, while Monday night on ITV is Sad Old James Bond Film Night. You wouldn't be able to have a Property Night, because *every* night is property night, especially on BBC2 and Channel 4. Production companies have stopped pitching cookery shows, as people are apparently sick of them, but in reality people are far more sick of property shows. Yet two or three new ones start every week. Because this is now a mature genre, each new show is a very slight variation on previous formats, which usually means a property version of some other show on some other subject. Executives love cross-pollination of old ideas; it's new ideas that give them the collywobbles.

House Trapped, then, is effectively Properties From Hell – a downmarket ITV format given a petit bourgeois *Daily Mail* twist and so perfect for the new Channel 4. The presenters are a shaven-headed Scouse scally who used to be on *Brookside* but is now a property developer – we warm to him straight away – and the usual hatchet-faced woman estate agent. They visit people whose houses and lives have been blighted by landfill sites, motorway construction and mobile phone masts, and they give them useless after-the-horse-has-bolted advice.

"Darling, I think it's time we moved to a Channel 4 property programme"

In the old days this sort of programme would have looked at these issues rather more searchingly, but *Daily Mail* readers aren't interested in any of that. They just want to know how things are going to impact on them personally. Also they want to see people suffer. *House Trapped* fulfils this brief perfectly.

Over on BBC2, **Every Home Should Have One** is an anecdotal-history-of-property show of a type that would normally be presented by Adam Hart-Davis, if he weren't already presenting everything else on the channel. "Designer and inventor" Garry Lavin is the Hart-Davis substitute, overflowing with *Blue Peter* enthusiasm and prone to waving his arms about. How they have managed to stretch such a thin premise to six programmes is anyone's guess.

How I Made My Property Fortune does what it says on the tin, but with more wide-eyed admiration than seems wholly decent. Critical faculties have no place on Jane Root's aspirational BBC2. **Other People's Houses** is "the series that's full of ideas of what to do and, more importantly, what not to do when it comes to decorating your home." So says a sarky-looking tart in a brown coat and Darth Vader gloves who peers lasciviously into repulsively decorated rooms across the nation. This week a fat property developer and his wife wanted to turn their Norfolk farmhouse into a miniature Palace of Versailles. The fish in the barrel were duly shot, but to what point?

For none of these programmes would have had a chance of being commissioned if property weren't so hot. What happens when the wind changes, and TV executives move on to something else? In the real world everybody has been predicting a property meltdown for months, even years. Economic conditions are no longer favourable, so why do prices continue to soar? There's only one possible explanation: all the millions of property shows on TV, by inducing hysteria about the rising property market, are actually fuelling the market themselves. One day the shows will come to an end, and the *Daily Mail*'s greatest fears will become reality. Buy now, by all means, but sell the moment you hear that *Location Location Location* hasn't been renewed. Remember, you read it here first.

'Couch Potato'

AD NAUSEAM

LAST Monday a piece in the *Guardian's* media section cocked a snook at *Private Eye* for being duped by Labour MP Tom Watson's spoof website. Fair enough. Everyone knows that Lord Gnome thinks the internet is a new piece of fishing tackle, and that only people over 100 with gout are allowed to write for the *Eye*.

The writer behind the *Guardian* piece was Paul Carr, a young, net-savvy, clued-up, satirically minded kind of guy. Or is he?

Carr's *Guardian* piece was headlined, "Can't spot a spoof? Meet Google" and told how "a quick Google search will provide all of the information you need to decide whether you're safe to start cutting and pasting. It might be a bit more work but at least you won't have to explain to your boss why your publication has become the laughing stock of the web."

Unfortunately for Carr, web users reading his piece may have noticed that to the right there was an ad for… Google. As he sets out on his mission to slay sacred cows and expose humbug, he will no doubt be appalled to find that he himself has been an ad man's stooge.

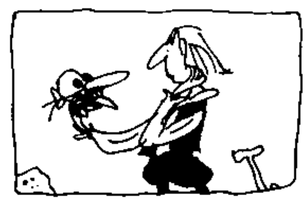
In fact had Carr followed his own advice and done a Google search on *Guardian* articles plugging Google, he would have discovered that no fewer than 14 Google-puffs have appeared in the *Guardian*'s media pages since the beginning of last year under headlines such as "Why Google leaves everybody Googling", "Google is one of the wonders of the wired world", "Web masters", "How Google got it so right", "Google is the net dominator", "Seeking search engine perfection." and so on.

He might also have twigged that something was up when he read the following scorching exposé, which appeared on the fearless Media Monkey diary page: "The Google search engine is celebrating master artist MC Escher's birthday today by making its logo looked pencil-sketched and turning the two o's in its name into Escher-like curved arms, with the hands holding pencils. Google made a similar tribute for Salvador Dali's birthday – with melted clocks instead of o's. It's a low key but fun touch that most brands would not dare make for fear of defiling their logos."

As usual there was a "Google Keyword Advertising" logo to one side. If you clicked on it, you were taken to a page that read "Google advertising delivers results". It certainly does – like endless coverage in the *Guardian*.

LUVVIES

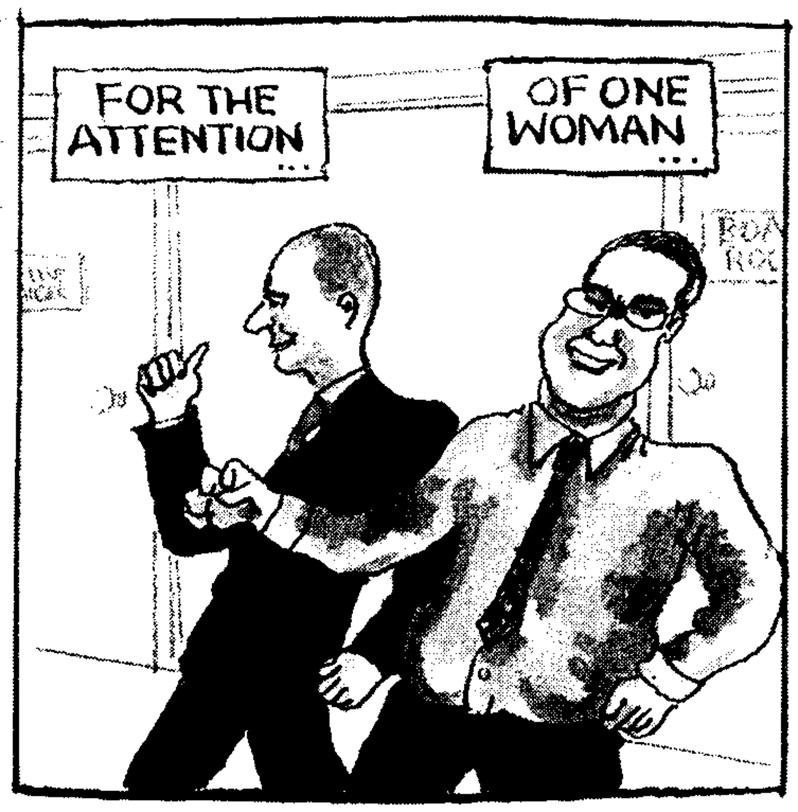
The many advertising voice-overs? Apparently not just a financial decision. 'It's a rare skill I have,' he says... 'Most actors can't do voiceovers.' Why is that? 'You have to understand what the ad is getting at right away, and then you have to be able to squeeze it into 39-and-a-half seconds. Partly, I right away get what the ad is after and I also have an internal clock running in my head where I can time things to a quarter second. So I do it for the money, but also because I like that craft aspect of being an actor.'

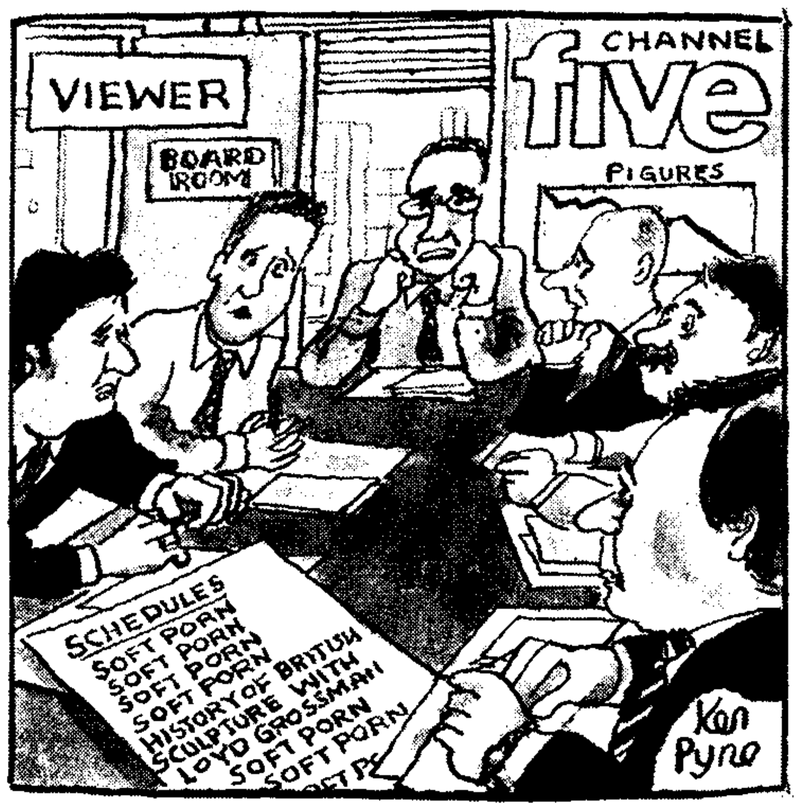


ALEXEI SAYLE
Observer

Submitted by Strobes.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.





GOING LIVE

WHY on earth did ITV's "News" at Ten go live to the royal courts of justice on 14 August to hear a report on the Hutton inquiry from John Ray, five hours after everybody had gone home?

John Suchet in the studio didn't even bother to put questions to Ray who simply introduced a package he'd made earlier in the day.

MEDIA NEWS

DAVID ELSTEIN, former boss of Channel 5, has kissed and made up with the Conservative party. Last week it was announced that he would chair the party's review of the structure and funding of the BBC.

Fifteen years ago this would have been unthinkable. As head of Thames Television when it produced the *Death on the Rock* documentary, the infamous documentary about the shooting in Gibraltar of three unarmed IRA members by the SAS, Elstein robustly defended the programme against stinging rebukes from an array of Tory MPs, including the prime minister herself.

When Thames subsequently lost its ITV franchise, there were few happier souls than the Tory leadership who believed Thames had got what was coming to it.

With the redundant Elstein now himself a sniper from the sidelines and the Conservatives keen to find someone to confirm its prejudices about the Beeb, it seems convenience and expedience have reconciled the two.

BY common consent the funeral of Dr David Kelly was to be a media-free zone, allowing his family a modicum of privacy before the Hutton inquiry began. As the central protagonist in the sorry affair, one might have expected the BBC to have been more sensitive than anyone to this.

However, on the day of the funeral BBC News Online ran a report featuring a long-range photo of Dr Kelly's coffin. The subsequent response from the Beeb justified it on the following grounds: "A pooled media facility was set up by Thames Valley Police involving a Sky News cameraman and a Press Association reporter and photographer… The pictures used by BBC News Online came from this pool facility where the waiting journalists were kept at a respectful distance from the church where the funeral was taking place."

And did BBC News Online really have to use a photo-composite banner over stories showing a see-through Kelly looming over the shoulder of Lord Hutton as though his "ghostly" presence was watching over the inquiry?

Elsewhere in the BBC's coverage, in a similar picture the unquiet shade of Dr Kelly glowers behind Tony Blair.

ITN-balls

THE ITV News Channel found an eye-witness in New York city as the power cut began. "How long do you think it will take you to get home?" asked the anchor.

"I really can't say."

The news hound tried again: "When did the power cut happen?"

"I don't know. The first I knew was when someone in your department spoke to me."

Brilliant.

THE supposed attraction of fly-on-the-wall documentaries is their raw "reality", as opposed to staged drama. So it's curious that easyJet, which dominates Granada's alleged documentary series *Airline*, has been touting for passengers with interesting stories to tell.

It wants them to contact the programme makers in advance. "easyJet would like any passengers with interesting reasons for travelling over the next eight months who would like to be part of this popular programme to email airline@granadamedia.com with details of their trip."

So much for "series number eight of one of ITV's top factual programmes" being an off-the-cuff, impromptu documentary as viewers might suspect.

But not to worry, as easyJet's Ray Webster puts it: "Research has shown that most viewers find our staff warm and engaging, and easyJet enjoys an increase in bookings when it is broadcast."

JOHN HUMPHRYS was clearly deeply interested in a discussion about the possible health risks to women of hormone replacement therapy on Radio 4's *Today* programme on 9 August.

The former Tory MP for Billericay, Teresa Gorman, an HRT enthusiast, said it was well known that some women had an genetically increased risk of breast cancer. But Dr Jennifer Hays, an American expert on the subject, replied: "We are seeing that on top of any genetic risk there is an additional risk [with HRT]."

Turning to Mrs Gorman, Humphrys said: "Well, there we are. That deals with your point, Mrs Hormone, er, Gorman…"

DUMB BRITAIN

BBC Midlands Late Show

Alex Trelinski: What is the capital of Italy?

Contestant: France.

Trelinski: France is another country. Try again.

Contestant: Oh, um, Benidorm.

Trelinski: Wrong, sorry, let's try another question. In which country is the Parthenon?

Same contestant: Sorry, I don't know.

Trelinski: Just guess a country then.

Contestant: Paris.

The Saturday Show, BBC1

Presenter: What was the name of Queen Victoria's husband?

Teenage girl: Dirty Den.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Rev. Gene Robinson Crusoe

TUC NEWS

UNEASE about the parlous state of the GMB's finances came to a head last month when the union's new general secretary, Kevin Curran, was summoned to see the bank manager and told the union's credit was exhausted. Some of the family silver would have to be sold if staff were to get their wages.

Not helping the GMB's cash crisis is the cost of financing the GMB's youth division called, er, "Massive Youth". (Get the flavour of the future of trade unionism at its website, massiveyouth.com, and groove to the "trance" music!) The cost of funding the Massive branch in the three years of its existence has topped £250,000. Whether this is good value is open to question, given that the branch has just 200 members, of whom only 70 are new recruits, the remainder being GMB members under the age of 27 who were transferred from other branches to boost Massive's not-so-massive membership list.

Massive expenditure from GMB coffers so far includes an unlimited supply of condoms for its members (no pun intended), subsidised piss-ups and a 4x4 Jeep-style vehicle.

Running the Massive branch is one Katie Jones, who happens to be the daughter of Gary Jones, the GMB's Lancashire regional secretary. A close ally of Curran, Jones was not best pleased when the *Sun* revealed at the time of the recent British Airways swipe card dispute that GMB staff in the Lancashire region themselves had to use swipe cards after Jones had rubber-stamped plans for their introduction. Jones read the riot act to his admin staff and officers, telling them they would be individually interviewed about the leak and that "heads will roll".

'Blackleg'

SUPERMODELS

THIS LITTLE PIGGY WENT TO MARKET...
...THIS LITTLE PIGGY STAYED AT HOME....
....AND ALL THE OTHER LITTLE PIGGIES WERE REMOVED BY A SURGEON, SO THAT YOU COULD BUY A PAIR OF JIMMY CHOO'S ON THE WAY HOME!
JIMMY CHOO

DOING THE ROUNDS

Tooth Fury

"NHS dentistry seems to be cryogenically frozen on the edge of crisis." So says an article in the *Health Service Journal*, dating the problems back to the Conservatives' 1991 contract reforms which caused an exodus of dentists into the private sector.

John Major promised everyone access to an NHS dentist, and Tony Blair fell into the same trap at the 1999 Labour party conference. His deadline of September 2001 failed so pitifully that Downing Street backtracked and pretended he just meant everyone could phone up NHS Direct and find out where there nearest NHS dentist is.

The absurdity of this ploy was well publicised last month, with NHS Direct Wales advising dentist-less patients to take a trip to the Mansell Street practice in Carmarthen. One man paid £8.30 to get on the 8.15am bus from Aberaeron, arriving at 9.25 am to find himself at the back of a 600-strong queue. Two years on from Tony's pledge, and patients are still having to make a 100-mile round trips to find a dentist or, more likely, stock up on painkillers and do without.

So, where's it all gone wrong? In private medical practice you get treated quicker but the standard of care and quality of materials is usually no better than the NHS. In private dentistry, you get speed, better materials and a better standard of care – although you can also get ripped off. The latter is not just the domain of private medicine. Last year, the audit commission found that dentistry was "one of the significant areas of NHS fraud".

The commission also quoted John Renshaw, British Dental Association executive board chair, as saying: "The way we work is often driven more by the way we are paid than by the treatment needs of our patients." The fact that dentists are human, and respond to financial incentives, is unsurprising. The trick is to give them incentives to provide the best possible care on the NHS, which clearly isn't happening.

A report published in *UK Dental Care* earlier this year found that, for the first time, dentists are receiving more than half their income from treating private patients. It also found that the number of adults registered for NHS treatment is 1.5 million lower than when Labour took over, and five million lower than the Tory peak in 1994. The vast majority of dentists continue with some NHS work and would love to do more, but only if resources are sufficient for them to provide a comparable standard of care to private practice.

The buck for commissioning NHS dentistry, and just about everything else, has now been passed on to beleaguered primary care trusts, most of whom haven't got a clue how to meet government criteria on providing "reasonable dental services". Adult orthodontic work is near impossible to get on the NHS, and only a public uproar saved the service for children.

As with medicine, the shortage of practitioners has forced the government's hand. Temporary registration of overseas dentists is being extended, and they can work for 18 weeks in salaried NHS clinics. Whether these dentists work to the same standards as UK-trained dentists is anybody's guess, because in the scramble to clear the backlog it's unlikely much attention will be paid to the quality of the work.

Education is also urgently needed. Health inequalities in tooth decay are huge, and dental hospitals are regularly putting children as young as three under general anaesthetic and removing a dozen rotten milk teeth. The bottom line with dentistry is that quality costs, and prevention is better than a drill. I've never used a private doctor, but I have a private dentist. And, as he puts it: "Only floss the teeth you want to keep."

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

MR JOHNSON, IN ALL MY YEARS I'VE NEVER SEEN A CASE LIKE YOURS...
I HAVE TO SAY IT LOOKS VERY BAD FOR YOU...
BURGERS, CRISPS, DOUGHNUTS?
YOU CAN'T RECOVER FROM A QUADRUPLE BYPASS ON AN EMPTY STOMACH

SIGNAL FAILURES

Money for old rope

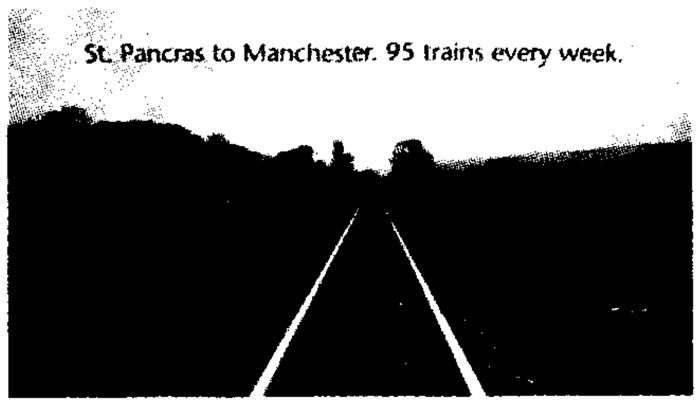
OF ALL the ways devised by civil servants for the private sector to rip off the state, the most bizarre has to be train leasing.

In the 1990s British Rail's passenger trains were sold to three companies for far less than their true value. The aim was competitive train leasing. The government set lease charges much higher than the older, largely depreciated trains were worth and increased subsidies to train operators correspondingly. This has netted about £500m a year above the trains' real value for the leasing companies, now owned by Royal Bank of Scotland, Abbey National and HSBC.

Nearly 10 years later there's no genuine competition in train leasing, yet the activity is unregulated despite its reliance on public funds. Leasing firms still get silly money for their old rope because operators have no realistic alternative. As most franchises are subsidised, taxpayers are paying through the nose for trains which they bought in the first place.

The "strategic" rail authority (SRA) is running out of cash because it's being ripped off by so many private companies (more than £900m a year goes on train leasing alone), so it plans to cut maintenance of regional railways. But it has said nothing about curbing the costs of trains for those railways, including the appalling "pacer" trains, bought by BR in desperation during Margaret Thatcher's budget cuts. Those trains use a primitive chassis for an especially bumpy ride, and bus bodies that disintegrate in a serious crash. Yet the leasing charges are about £150,000 pa per pair of carriages – nearly half what it cost the public to buy the things in the first place, at today's prices.

The SRA prefers this dross to new trains for the new regional franchises, the first of which, covering Wales, will apparently rely on the stop-gap "pacer" trains for another 15 years. Meanwhile, Britain's best-ever carriages, also built in the 1980s, are being displaced by new trains on the west-coast mainline but have not been assigned other roles and could be flogged overseas, like the high-quality carriages shipped to New Zealand and Ireland in the 1990s. Or they'll be left in the open to deteriorate or be scrapped. The last thing the leasing companies want is a surplus of usable trains in Britain, leading to a competitive market where operators shop around.



THE designers of the Midland Mainline poster advertising its fast London to Manchester (West Coast replacement) service must have cringed at news that rail lines were buckling in the heat.

The ad, currently plastered all over the tube network, shows the railway line all red and glowing. Which as commuters now know, probably isn't a good thing.

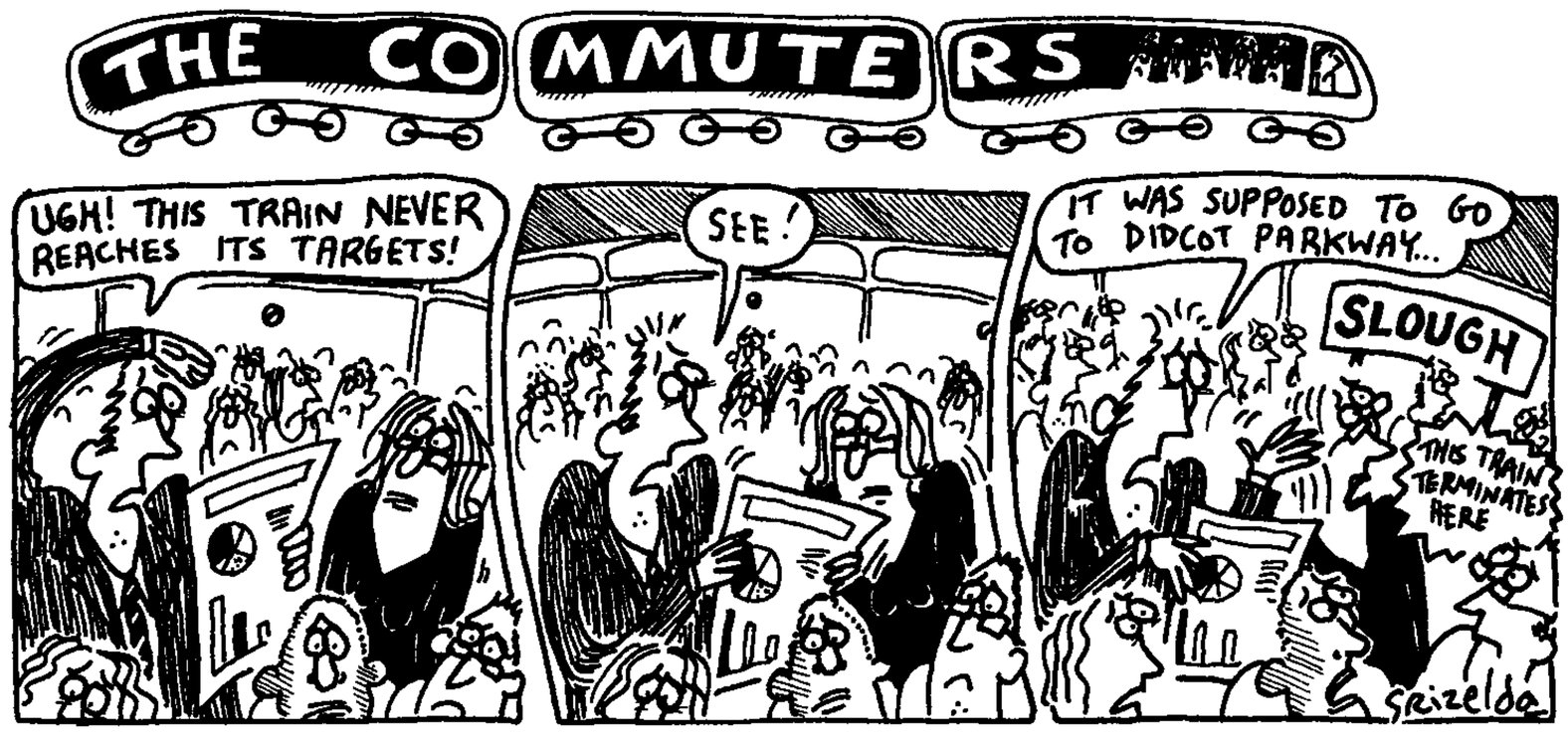
The SRA has praised the leasing companies for supplying hundreds of new carriages. But those trains are for catching up on the 1,064-day hiatus in new trains during privatisation, and the train leasing companies have missed the original deadline for eradicating slam-door commuter trains by nearly six years so far. The leasing companies can offset investment against tax, inflating again the cost to the public. Another hiatus is in the offing because of the SRA's cash problems.

The SRA says rail costs must fall but hasn't yet acknowledged it could save money by buying trains itself (even if it used private finance) and ending the charade of subsidy being handed to operators for them to pass to train leasing companies.

ONE OF the masterminds behind train leasing was Sir Christopher Foster, special advisor on rail privatisation to John MacGregor, the Tory transport secretary who kicked off the process. Is he feeling guilty now privatisation has made the railways so inefficient that regional railways face budget cuts and even worse delays?

Not at all. Foster later became chairman of the RAC Foundation, the road lobby's torch bearer.

'Dr B. Ching'



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

TAXI RANK

IN OCTOBER 2001 (*Eye* 1039) we reported that many private "security" companies guarding schools and other public-private "partnership" projects in Scotland were being run by criminals.

The contract to guard Glasgow's revamped Springburn Academy, for instance, had gone to M&M Security, one of whose partners, Paul McGovern, was jailed for the murder in 1990 of Thomas Cushley – a caretaker at Springburn Academy.

Earlier this year (*Eye*s 1081 and 1084) we told how major Glasgow criminal Tam McGraw was the real power behind Raffles Private Hire, a minicab firm at the centre of corruption allegations surrounding Milton Keynes council's taxi licensing department.

In Glasgow itself, however, the city council has always remained untainted by association with "private hire" companies. Not any longer, however. For the past year a number of such firms have had contracts with the council, giving them a lucrative slice of the £4.3m the council spends annually on taxis. Most of this sum (£3.6m) still goes to the well-regulated "black cabs" of the Glasgow taxi operators' association, but the remainder, some £650,000, now adds to the profits of six "private hire" firms, the largest of which, Glasgow Private Hire, with more than 600 vehicles, was formerly known as Mac's Cabs. As *Eye* 1081 reported, Mac's Cabs was owned by Tam McGraw, believed to be Scotland's wealthiest criminal.

In 2000 Mac's was nominally sold to car dealer and sunbed operator Steven Malcolm. Back in 1992 Malcolm, with McGraw's associates Robert Roden and David Deans, was charged in connection with a stolen car racket. Charges against Malcolm were dropped, but Roden and Deans were convicted in January 1993 at Paisley sheriff court of reselling stolen cars. When they came out of prison they were sent to Milton Keynes to set up Raffles Private Hire.

PS Milton Keynes cabbie Dennis Edwards, who has alleged that MK council officers took backhanders to put work the way of Raffles, has had more death threats. A caller phoned to say there was a £25,000 price on his head, but the "hitman" told Edwards he was lucky, because he didn't take "business" close to home. A relief to Edwards – until he was told the business was being placed elsewhere.

● **IN *EYE* 1086 we said the Conservatives had not held a party conference in Brighton since 1988, when the town's then Labour mayor, Pat Hawkes, broke with tradition and used her "welcoming" speech to heap abuse on the Thatcher government. In fact, as we are grateful to Skidrow-on-Sea's press officer Alan Stone for pointing out, the Tories gave Brighton a second chance, and returned in 1992. Alas on that occasion they received yet another abusive "welcome" from another Labour mayor, Gill Sweeting, and have not been back since – with a resulting loss of business to the town.**

MATT'S YOUR LOT

LABOUR-RUN Tower Hamlets is at the centre of a Scotland Yard investigation into the misuse of millions of pounds of public money by three council-funded organisations.

Two Labour councillors have been referred to the Standards Board for England and banned from holding office in the Labour group pending the outcome of Knacker's inquiries, and two senior managers in the council's regeneration department have been suspended.

Alarm bells rang last year after an internal audit of the Whitechapel-based Millennium Advanced Technology Training company (Matt), a council scheme to provide computer training. Established in 1999, Matt received more than £2m of public money from sources including the Department for Education and Skills, the London Development Agency and the City of London. In January Tower Hamlets ceased funding Matt after forensic accountants RSM Robson Rhodes concluded that the organisation "had been used for fraudulent purposes and as a vehicle of deception and the diversion of public funds to sources unknown".

In May the London Labour party suspended Tower Hamlets councillors Kumar Murshid and Nasir Uddin from holding office in the Labour group pending the outcome of its own investigation into Matt.

In July the council cut off funding to two other regeneration schemes: Dame Colet House Ltd (objective "the relief of poverty and the advancement of public education") and the Youth Action Scheme ("to provide education and provision of facilities for recreational and leisure activities"), both based in Stepney. RSM Robson Rhodes found that both DCH and YAS had not "conducted their affairs in a manner expected of a body responsible for the management of public funds".

Both organisations had made payments to individuals based on fictitious invoices to cover inappropriate personal expenses. Contracts were awarded on a "who you know" basis without proper process and both companies were found to be wide open to false accounting. Some £35,000 was allegedly used to pay for hotels bills abroad.

One of the six directors of YAS listed at Companies House is Khan Ahmed Nuwayid Murshid, better known to his friends as plain old Kumar Murshid, who besides being one of the two Tower Hamlets councillors reported to the Standards Board is also a member of the mayor of London's cabinet and the London Development Agency board. Another YAS director is Ala Uddin, a former councillor and deputy leader of Tower Hamlets. The other councillor reported to the Standards Board, Nasir Uddin, was an employee of YAS.

With Knacker still investigating and the council busy considering how best to try to get its money back, Murshid is claiming he is the victim of "white supremacists in the town hall". A claim given short shrift by the leader of the council, Helal Abbas.

Meanwhile, the council's response to press interest in the scandal has been to employ a PR consultant, Lorraine Langham, to field all inquiries. She is being paid the equivalent of £130,000 a year (around five times as much as the council's regular press officers) and reports directly to the chief executive, who already has a deputy. In the crackdown on fraud, you can never have too many well-paid chiefs!

OH YEAH?

"Effective reputation management is central to a local authority's management strategy and is as important as good service delivery." – Flyer for forthcoming £500-a-head conference, Reputation Management in Councils, organised by Capita.

FOR FOX SAKE

LAST ISSUE we reported on a judge's ruling that East Northamptonshire district council was guilty of an "abuse of process" in bringing flimsy food safety prosecutions against publican Geoff Monks.

Since March (*Eye* 1075) the *Eye* has detailed how Monks's business and health were ruined by a series of trumped-up prosecutions resulting in record fines and a jail sentence. The saga began in 1998 with a raid by environmental health officers on one of Monks's three pubs shortly after he had barred "flamboyant" local solicitor Jenny Lawrence, who boasts of her friendships with senior figures on the council and magistrates. Judge HHJ Harris stayed proceedings in two further cases and ordered the council to pay Monks's costs in full.

Instead of apologising to Monks, however, the council put up two fingers to the judge. Just eight days after the ruling, on Tuesday 5 August, ENDC environmental health officers mounted yet another raid on Monks's surviving pub, the Snooty Fox – but abandoned it when they found Monks (who has a heart condition) was not on the premises. The following day it was ENDC trading standards officers' turn to raid the pub – where they could find nothing amiss. Local council taxpayers are bemused and alarmed, for such blatant harassment can only aggravate the colossal damages that must eventually be paid to this much-wronged man.

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

AN overcrowded south-coast school will not get its planned extension after councillors refused to pay the extortionate amount PFI contractors were demanding to carry out the work.

Peacehaven Schools Ltd (PSL) runs the 750-pupil school under a private finance initiative contract with East Sussex county council that began in 2001. The buildings were designed to be easily expandable to accommodate 900 pupils, as numbers were predicted to rise, and the council estimated that the extension work would cost £3.25m.

After 18 months of talks, PSL – a wholly owned subsidiary of HBG Projects, a consortium including HBG Construction, ING Barings and EMCOR as facilities managers – has been haggled down from its initial demand for an extra £7m to do the works to £5m.

Like most PFI contractors, HBG Projects must have believed it had the council over a barrel and could charge anything it liked since the customer couldn't go elsewhere. However, councillors abandoned the expansion after education director Denise Stockoe told them £5m was not good value for money.

Cllr Rupert Simmons, lead member for education, said: "PSL did come back with a revised proposal but this removed features that are essential to make it viable for 900 pupils and was therefore unacceptable."

The stalemate means many pupils will not be able to attend Peacehaven and will instead have to go to Lewes, Newhaven or Rottingdean by bus each day. As the contract has 23 years left to run, it looks unlikely the school will be made big enough to serve its community any time soon.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

WHAT AN AMAZING SOUND SYSTEM!
I'VE NEVER HEARD SHOSTAKOVICH 5 REPRODUCED WITH SUCH SCINTILLATING CLARITY!
OH, THAT'S QUIN'S NEW POLYPHONIC RING TONE
NOT NOW, MOTHER, I'M ENTERTAINING
CLICK

NOOKS and CORNERS

IT MAY be the silly season, but it can be no bad thing that the plight of historic buildings is much in the news. The BBC's series *Restoration* invites viewers to vote on saving one of a slightly skewed selection of threatened and decaying listed buildings: *no* churches (only very worthy chapels) and too many country houses of largely sentimental appeal, each of which has a celebrity advocate.

But never mind: if the programmes focus attention on these and other fine buildings suffering neglect, perhaps more people will ask how a building can be listed by government because of its architectural and/or historical importance and yet be allowed to be neglected or abandoned by its owner.

That this is a national problem is confirmed by *Risky Buildings*, the latest Buildings at Risk catalogue published by SAVE Britain's Heritage. The examples illustrated range from former railway structures to the 127-metre concrete Express Lifts Tower at Northampton; but most are houses, whether town or country, that could and should be repaired and inhabited.

The introduction quotes English Heritage's report on *The State of the Historic Environment* that, depending on which region is examined, between 2.1% and 8.8% of listed buildings are now at risk, which means some 22,000 buildings in England alone.

Meanwhile the government is looking at ways of changing, and we must hope, improving the machinery by which we look after our historic buildings. A consultation paper, *Protecting our historic environment: Making the system work better*, was issued by the Department for Culture, Media 'n' Sport in July. This document is unexpectedly reassuring, for it does not recommend that the fate of listed buildings should be decided by CABE, the ambitious Commission for the Built Environment, or by a forward-looking committee chaired by My Lord Rogers of Riverside. Rather, it recommends that there be a new unified national list (combining the current listing, scheduling and registration) and, significantly, the whole process of designation be handled by English Heritage instead of the present system of EH advising and the DCMS deciding if a building is to be listed. Providing there is sufficient openness and accountability, this can only be A Good Thing.

The government, like the BBC, seems to have recognised that conserving old buildings and historic places has popular support. But regenerating our cities, towns and villages cannot happen without the positive cooperation of local authorities. English Heritage cannot police the fate of the some half-million listed buildings in England alone; it requires local authorities to monitor their condition and to serve a repairs notice or, in extreme cases, a compulsory purchase order on delinquent owners, and this they are notoriously reluctant to do. Some of the more brutish local authorities have no interest at all in listed buildings, only in development, and do not employ any expert conservation officers. Others often ignore the advice of their sometimes poorly-trained and incompetent officers. It is up to local authorities to declare conservation areas, yet 65 percent of them have no budget for conservation area enhancement and 75 percent do not have conservation area advisory committees.

Furthermore, many of the buildings at risk highlighted by SAVE Britain's Heritage are actually owned by local authorities, which are always keen to own more but less keen to maintain assets properly. One of the short-listed candidates in the *Restoration* series is the Victoria Baths in Manchester, one of many baths, libraries, fire stations, schools and other worthy public buildings (usually paid for by ratepayers) abandoned and neglected by the local government organisations which should be looking after them. Until the government recognises that much of the problem with protecting the historic environment is the inertia, irresponsibility, stupidity and philistinism of so many local authorities, many of these proposals for improving the "system" are mere wishful thinking.

MY PICTURE shows Nos 5-15 Sun Street on the northern edge of the City of London near Liverpool Street Station. They were built in 1814-19 as part of the development of the Finsbury Estate begun by George Dance junior. This terrace is now a rare survival of simple Georgian elegance in the City, and stands in a conservation area.

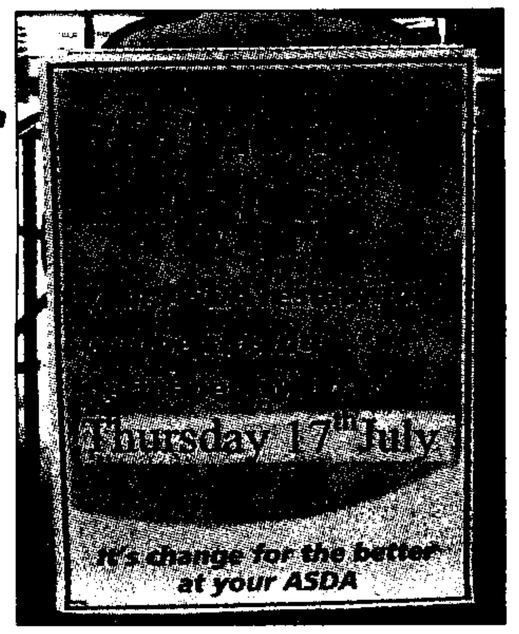
Pressure for commercial development to replace these modest, low-rise buildings is now obviously immense. An application for total demolition was submitted in 1996 but withdrawn after being called in by the secretary of state; another application in 2000 was strongly opposed by the Georgian Group. These buildings are vulnerable, although the Spitalfields Trust is willing to take them on and repair them. Yet they are not listed.

In 1995 English Heritage advised the then Department of National Heritage that the houses had been too much altered to be listed while being willing to defend them at public inquiry; last year the DCMS maintained this stance despite the belief of the Georgian Group, Hackney borough council and others they should be listed. They ought to be, and soon.

'Piloti'

I-SPY

Charlton, London



Submitted by Peter Haydon.

£10 paid for similar submissions.

(SAE required for return of photographs.)

Warballs

"Modernism died on September 11… At a time of mourning people no longer wanted panoramic views across a river out of vast glass windows… Sales of glass and steel furniture plummeted, while sales of burgundy mohair throws rocketed."

— Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, *Observer.*

"Planet Ice Cream Inc. has been a dream of founder Richard S. Brown for over ten years, but has now become a reality. The vision became clear after September 11th when many pursued life-changing career moves. Brown knew if he was going to start Planet Ice Cream, and follow his dream, the time was now!"

— Possepops.com website.

"What is in this year? More colourful textiles, softer looks and large sofas. The cosier feel is a response to the traumas of September 11 and the war in Iraq."

— *FT* article on new Ikea catalogue, 14 August.

"'Since September 11, people want a richer experience at work and I don't mean money,' says Grant Sexton, the managing director of Leadership Management Australia."

— Mycareer.com, Australian careers website.

"'To New York With Love' is a beautiful and moving work. It can't be easy to express the many complex emotions evoked by the tragedy of 9/11 in a silver pendant but somehow the artists have managed to do just this."

— From the website of Lynn Tindale, Scottish jewellery designer.

"11th September will always be remembered for the tragic terrorist attack against the free world. But now the notorious date will conjure up more pleasurable memories for those involved in the press and media industries. The West Midlands Media Awards Post Party Event held at Digress was a night that will not easily be forgotten. An invitation only event, it celebrated with the regional media. A beer and curry affair that was as hot and messy as any Madras."

— Mailshot from the organizers of this year's West Midlands Media Awards on 11 September.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

I can't understand it! The papers are full of trivial, gimmicky rubbish...
... yet there's nothing about cutting-edge art at all!
BEER GARDEN
SILLY SEASON STORIES
HARD ATTACK ON PARK
FISH ICE LOLLIES FOR SEALS
Er...
SILLY

O·B·N·K

I wish to compliment Greg Dyke on his remarkable leadership during the events of the last month or so. There cannot have been a time in the BBC's history when it has come under such sustained attack from government. The robust responses from Greg, Richard Sambrook, Gavyn Davies and the governors have truly been impressive.

'Ariel', BBC Staff Newspaper

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

DOWN ON THE FARM

NOTHING better expressed "new" Labour's contempt for Britain's farmers and fishermen than the decision, after the foot and mouth debacle, to put them under a new ministry which deliberately left both agriculture and fisheries out of its title.

But the Beloved Leader still had one more trick up his sleeve in his recent choice of a new junior farming and fisheries minister: Ben Bradshaw, the former BBC journalist whose proudest boasts on various websites are that he was the first MP to get a House of Commons security pass for his gay partner, and that he came 112th in a poll of the top 500 heroes to Britain's gay and lesbian community.

Serving under Alan Michael, now known as minister of state for "rural affairs and urban quality of life", Bradshaw's main qualifications for holding an array of *countryside* portfolios seem to be that he likes walking on Dartmoor with his partner and passionately opposes hunting. He is also a fervent Europhile, which is handy since almost every aspect of his brief now comes under the direction of Brussels. But this has not prevented his armies of officials exercising their ingenuity to find the most damaging ways possible to interpret EU legislation.

Ever longer becomes the list of controversial issues on which Bradshaw's chief role has been to defend his officials' absurd conduct to the hilt. As minister for fisheries science, for instance, he has backed the insane blunder whereby Britain's £20m a year cockle industry is being destroyed by a test which involves injecting mice with massive quantities of shellfish mixed with toxic solvent. When the mice die from the solvent, the scientists claim it must be because of an "unknown toxin" in the cockles. Britain's cockle fisheries are closed down, putting thousands out of work.

As minister for plant health, Bradshaw has defended the reign of terror imposed on many of Britain's best-known gardens and plant nurseries in the name of stamping out Sudden Oak Death Syndrome, or SODS. The EU has panicked that this mysterious disease, which kills trees in California, may be the same as a blight which for decades has affected rhododendrons in Britain without affecting a single oak tree. At a cost of millions of pounds, hundreds of acres of rhododendrons have gone up in smoke, and famous gardens and nurseries have been closed, to no purpose whatever.

As minister for animal welfare, Bradshaw will shortly be presiding over the closure of Europe's largest sheep fair, at Lairg in Sutherland, because new EU animal welfare rules make it impossible for farmers across the highlands and islands to move their animals to and from Lairg in the time allowed.

As minister for the veterinary medicines directorate, Bradshaw is now responsible for continuing the OPs cover-up, which he recently did to great effect when asked about three of his Exeter constituents whose health had been destroyed by having to drive leaking cans of OP sheep dip round Devon farms. Although when he met the three victims some years back he expressed sympathy for their plight (one has since died), in his new role as "minister for the cover up" he now denies he ever met them. Labour can be proud of the boy.

'Muckspreader'

Down on the Fish Farm

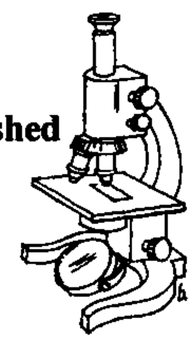
A FLURRY of denials greeted our recent claim that foreign workers, many of them illegal immigrants, are the backbone of Scotland's fish processing business. In July, when immigration officials raided Amazon Seafoods at Kyle of Lochalsh in the West Highlands, they arrested seven out of 25 Polish and Czechoslovakian workers at the plant and gave the remainder two weeks to leave the country.

Having lost its immigrant workforce, and there being no locals clamouring to take their place, it seems the Amazon Seafoods plant might have to close. In Stornoway on the island of Lewis, meanwhile, 39 jobs are to go at Western Isles Seafood, including the cadre of students and foreign backpackers the firm "relied on to maintain production." A further 82 jobs went in Stornoway when Dutch-owned Marine Harvest closed its fish processing plant.

● THE spectre of Technetium 99, radioactive waste from the Sellafield nuclear power plant in Cumbria, has returned to haunt the salmon farmers. In July, the Food Standards Agency confirmed its presence in farm salmon in Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda, Safeway, Waitrose and Marks & Spencer stores in London. Further fish-shit hit the fan when US researchers claimed that a sample taken from a Shetland-farmed salmon had far higher levels of cancer-causing PCBs than fish from Iceland, Canada or the US.

'Old Trout'

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



OFTEL has a long and distinguished history in messing around with our telephones. Its aim is to promote competition and give consumers a better deal; but in the end it can actually make things messier, more complicated and more expensive.

Oftel's latest wheeze has been to deregulate the 192 directory inquiries service, a staple of national life for decades. Once 192 was free; then it started costing rather a lot of money; now, from 23 August it will be replaced by a plethora of numbers starting 118. Each "DQ" (in Oftelspeak) line will be run by a different company and have a confusing array of tariffs: unit cost, cost per connection, cost per second and so on. All in small print.

How are consumers to know which is the best deal or remember the numbers? Confusion reigns. Funnily enough, until recently phone users in the United States, home of choice and the free market, had to cope with hundreds of different numbers each for a local exchange, run by different networks. Then America got wise and offered the nationwide 411 service, which does exactly what 192 does here. But won't for much longer.

Oftel, as we reported a few months back, also made a dog's breakfast of Britain's broadband network, slowing its spread by stopping BT from making use of its marketing information to roll out high speed internet access. How much more difficult can Oftel make things?

DR Phillip Campbell, editor of *Nature*, has been appointed to a Royal Society panel investigating the publication of dodgy science. The RS cites the example of the false claims by the Raelian sect last Christmas that they had cloned a human baby.

The panel would no doubt have been interested in a paper, published in 2002, suggesting that DNA from transgenic maize could become incorporated into the wild genome. The publication of this research was much-criticised by many scientists, who judged that the paper was fatally – and obviously – flawed. Five months later the journal printed, through gritted teeth, an admission that the authors of the paper had not managed to justify their claims.

The journal guilty of publishing all this dodgy scientific research? *Nature*.

'Boffin'

Letters

Private Eye

Sun spot

Sir,

*Your Dr Boffin urges funding for investigating the possibility that solar inactivity is the main cause of global warming. Fair enough, but he implies that **if** the sun is to blame, then we can carry on with the great burn-up regardless.*

So global warming is now a great carpet to sweep all the other worries under and forget them – pollution of the biosphere, ozone depletion, destruction of topsoil, George Bush, overwhelming of insurance companies by man-made disasters, AIDS, multinationals, etc. Then the US can feel good about turning its back on Kyoto.

*I suggest Dr Boffin might tell us whether there is any cabinet sub-committee looking into what to do if civilisation collapses? (There could be lots of ways to plan for soft(ish) landings.) We know Lord Sainsbury runs one on how to stop asteroids, but I bet no government people would dare frighten the horses by **publicly** discussing something that happened to all civilisations before ours (see Joseph Tainter's* The Collapse of Complex Societies, *CUP 1990 for a non-sensational overview).*

I hope Dr Boffin will at least accept that there are many triggers which, pulled at the same time, might lead to that dreary world of families guarding their potato patches with AK47s. Give the sun a break – we are a little bit responsible for our own destiny.

Yours sincerely,
ROBIN OAKLEY-HILL,

Sevenoaks, Kent.

Kitsch and tell

Sir,

Piloti's article (1085) on the proposed St Leonard's Mosque raised a couple of interesting points. An official is quoted as saying, "In Islamic law, once a building has been used for a mosque it can not be used for any other purpose." This is only for purpose-built mosques, not ex-bingo halls, cinemas or schools. In the USA, for example, many communities have had to leave their neighbourhood mosques and scholarly opinions ("fatwas") were sought and permission given to leave them.

Piloti's other point – the dreadful design of modern UK mosques – is very important. The Muslim world boasts some wonderful modern architects – especially from Lebanon and Turkey – but the UK Muslims insist on kitsch designed by someone of Pakistani descent.

This will leave a legacy of awful, ugly buildings to dismay future generation of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The UAE, for example, boasts some truly beautiful mosques, many of which would harmonise with traditional British buildings such as Mercatoria in St Leonards. I hold out little hope for British Islamic architecture. Those with money to build mosques would seem to have no taste at all.

Yours faithfully,
UTHMAN BARRY,

Dar Al Ber Society, Dubai.

RUBBERTECH2000
Whimsey Trading Estate, Cinderford, Glos, GL14 3JA
We are specialist moulders of silicone rubber and have a:
Vacancy for a Flexible Person to work in 3 departments.
Forest & Wye Valley Review

Scenes You Seldom See

"It's going to be a chemist"

Curran landslide

Sir,

Congratulations to Blackleg for revealing the nefarious activities of GMB boss Kevin Curran who "sold the shipyard workers down the river in Newcastle" (TUC News, 1085).

As someone who works on the river I watched in disgust as Curran did his dirty work. His intervention led to more work in the yards since the 1970s, the creation of 2,500 new jobs, the highest rates of pay for shipyard workers anywhere in Europe and the creation of an adult apprenticeship scheme that gave new chances to people in some of the most deprived communities in the UK.

As you can imagine, GMB members were outraged.

The good news is that GMB members had their revenge in the recent general secretary election – only 67% of them voted for Curran in his landslide victory.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL BLENCH,

Wallsend, Tyne & Wear.

What a knave

Sir,

Re: Piloti's column in 1086. Surely there can be no more perfect congruence between form and function than that a church which no longer has a function should be demolished, and so no longer have a form, or sold, and so perhaps find a new function which fits its existing form.

RICHARD CALEY,

Via email.

Grammar schooling

Sir,

Fernando Tiberini's criticism of Private Eye's standards of foreign grammar points out that a column in issue 1085 has "no less than seven orthographical or grammatical mistakes". Surely this should be "no fewer than"?

His penultimate paragraph's use of the word "therefore" also creates a non sequitur, as it doesn't necessarily logically follow that his illustrious CV compels him to offer his proof-reading services to Private Eye.

FRANCIS HARVEY,

Via email.

LUVVIES

Hello. How are the rehearsals going?

Intense and inspiring. If acting is a muscle, Katie Mitchell our director is an Olympic trainer. Weeping has been heard in the toilets. I save my tears for the cycle home.

BEN DANIELS
Independent on Sunday

Submitted by Arif Ellam.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Bramham rocks

Sir,

Re: Rotten Boroughs (1086). The promoter first made the offer of residents' tickets weeks after Leeds city council, the parent authority for Bramham, had granted the licence, despite the parish council's concerns. The offer was accepted because this would allow villagers to attend the event at an advantageous price as well as supporting local projects. You are wrong to suggest that this will swell the parish coffers. The fund is separate from the council accounts and will only be used for good causes.

To counter touts, tickets will be distributed less than a week before the event, only in the village, only to personal applicants with proof of residence.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN POOL,

Clerk to the Council, Bramham Parish Council, Wetherby, W. Yorkshire.

Lookalike

Archer

King Carl Gustav

Sir,

Lord Archer must have been saving this one till last. He and Carl XVI Gustav are clearly identical twins, separated at birth. It can only be a matter of time before Jeffrey ascends the throne of Sweden.

Yours,
SIMON REES,

Cardiff.

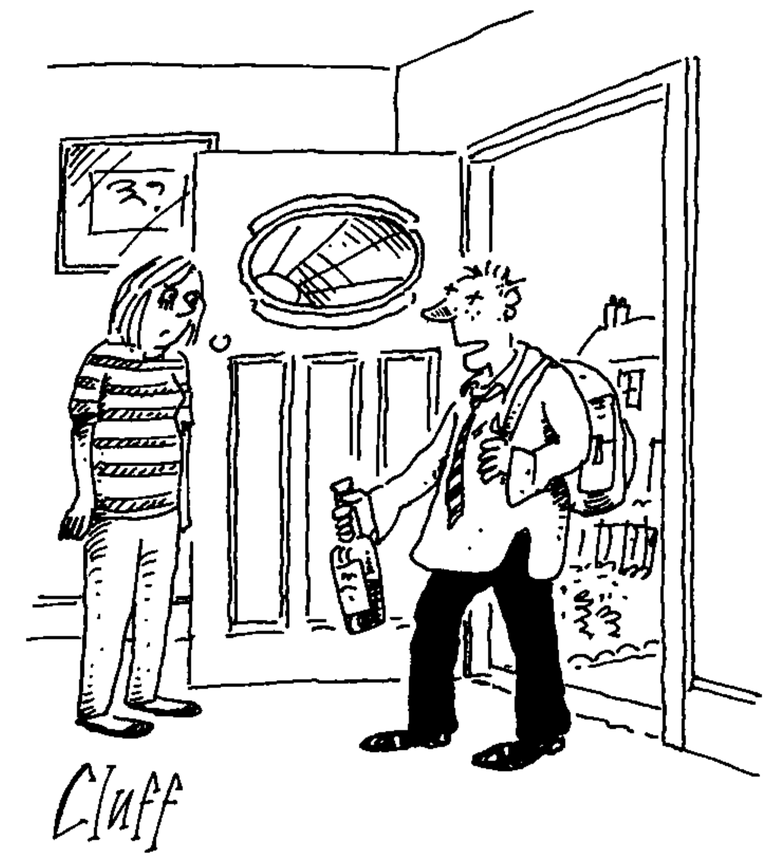
Talking bollocarum

Sir,

Simon Davies (Letters, 1086, re: Latin tag on Funny Old World illustration) is right to point out that bollocarum *is the correct form. However, I must defend the cartoon over the gender. There is nothing illogical about* bolloca *being feminine. I'm sure he remembers that* penis *is also feminine and that those bastions of male sexuality, sailors (nautae) are as well. That's enough Latin.*

Yours in pedantry and in search of a life,
SIMON WHITLOW,

Halesowen, West Midlands.



"They've got rid of 'A' Levels – we're doing the Bacchanalian system instead"

Hillsborough

● Thanks to all those who responded to Adam Wilson's letter in the last *Eye* regarding Hillsborough and the *Sun*. Here are a selection of comments. Ed.

The disaster was a catalogue of calamitous events – the incompetence of Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, the ineptitude of South Yorkshire police, the ineffectiveness of Sheffield City Council (the club never even had a valid safety certificate) and the arrogance of the Football Association. But never have I seen such a complex matter brought down to a simplistic throw-away comment such as "If they had walked, there would have been no crush" like some sort of schoolyard game.

*It is an insult to the dead, the bereaved and the survivors: an insult which proves that the lies propagated by the S*n are still alive and well in the minds of some people.*

JOHN MCCORMICK,

Via email.

If Adam Wilson questions P.E. Dant's assertion [Letters, 1085] that the Sun was wrong to claim that Liverpool supporters ("many ticketless", of course) caused the deaths of 96 of their number, he must believe the Sun's version was correct. Even Murdoch hacks have long given up on that line, although an unconditional apology is still outstanding.

Yours (never walking alone, but with 135 ghosts),

THOMAS RIPLEY,

Liverpool.

Mr Wilson [shows] little understanding of crowd dynamics and none of the disaster. The crush outside the turnstiles developed through a lack of a filtering system into the restricted area and many late arrivals due to unexpected road works on the journey from Liverpool (a fact the police had been made aware of). The opening of the gates sent a vast human wave into the ill-fated central pens, akin to a dam breaking. CCTV footage shows no fans running on to the terrace... instead they were forced forward through sheer weight and pressure of numbers from behind. Justice Taylor's report dismisses "ticketless fans" as a contributory factor.

It is the sort of ignorance displayed in Mr Wilson's letter that sees the Hillsborough Justice Campaign's work remain vital in educating the many who misunderstand the terrible events of that day.

Yours,
STEPHEN DAVIES,

Norwich.

I don't think this publication is the place to debate the many causes which culminated in 96 people losing their lives, nor is it the place to discuss in depth the causes which led to the Heysel tragedy...

Adam Wilson seems to convey the impression that fault for these events was because there were Liverpool fans without tickets on both occasions. This simplistic view beggars belief. It also echoes comments made by (then) Forest manager Brian Clough in his autobiography. At least Mr Clough (belatedly) had the decency to apologise for the upset he caused.

Yours,
IAN LEYLAND,

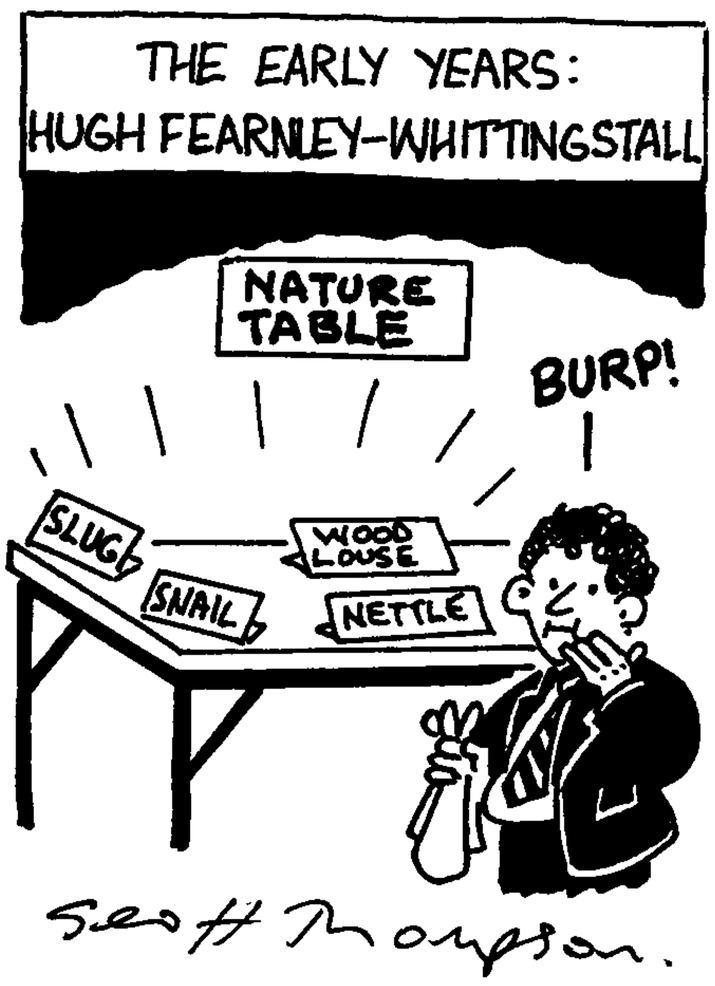
Sunderland (formerly of Formby, Liverpool)

The truth about Hillsborough is openly accepted by anyone who has studied the evidence in any detail. Despite the dissatisfaction of various parties with the various investigations conducted, those investigations have resulted in one thing at least. Most of the recorded evidence is now freely accessible through the House of Commons library.

I would suggest that anyone considering contributing further to this correspondence spend a bit of time there first.

DR ED WALKER,

Dewsbury, West Yorkshire.



Settle the score

Sir,

Fortunately, Florence E. Gersten's fears about Liverpool's Central Library disposing of our prized musical heritage are unfounded.

The music scores we sold off recently hadn't been requested for up to 60 years. They were gathering dust and taking up space. We don't sell off rare books and archives, but we do make sure the library stocks what people want!

The current music stocks at Liverpool Central Library are well regarded and well used, mostly by the 300 or so musical societies that operate in and around the city.

Best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
CLLR MIKE STOREY CBE,
Leader, Liverpool City Council.

Eye in the sky

Sir,

It seems that Sky TV is willing to spend ridiculous amounts of cash on presenters like John Leslie – an incredible £31m according to the Eye. Or did the columnist have an involuntary spasm over the crucial keys?

Yours sincerely,
THOMAS LAMB,
Via email.

Off target

Sir,

Crossword 241, 18 ac: I wonder how many boring old taxonomo-pedants like me will write to point out to Cyclops that the middle of an archer's target is called "the gold", not "the bull".

Yours,
MICHAEL GROSVENOR,
Via email

Great Yuk-mouth

Sir,

Allow me to reassure Michael Spragg on a capital-based media type's view of Great Yarmouth (Letters, 1085). My girlfriend and I recently booked a romantic tryst at a hotel overlooking Defoe's finest quay whence we gazed upon chemical works and supermarket trolleys dumped in Nelson's canal. Mock-Tudor façades failed to disguise how moribund the fishing port really was; my girlfriend refused to get out of the car until we were back in Norwich.

Yours,
PHILIPPE PARKER,
Bermondsey, London.

Prick our conscience

Sir,

Nodding vociferously, in agreement with MD, about the availability of prescription-only medicines online, I was understandably surprised to read the classified advertisements columns (Trust Me I'm a Cyber Doc, 1085). Under Eye Care there are four direct-to-consumer adverts for Viagra available without a prescription. Do you care? This seems a bit of a cock up!

Yours,
VIVIENNE BEN-DAVID
(a caring pharmacist),
Via email.

Big bother

Sir,

Many articles in your publication have nearly had me cancelling my subscription, but I have refrained. If you continue to discuss "Big Brother" I don't think that my conscience will allow me to remain a reader.

DAVID PIMBLETT,
Horbury.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"If you shut your eyes for a moment you wouldn't know it was a pre-season friendly."
Commentator, MU TV, Channel 4
(Helen Hargreaves)

"The vendetta is on the other foot."
SIR CHRISTOPHER BLAND, Radio 4
(Bryn Mills)

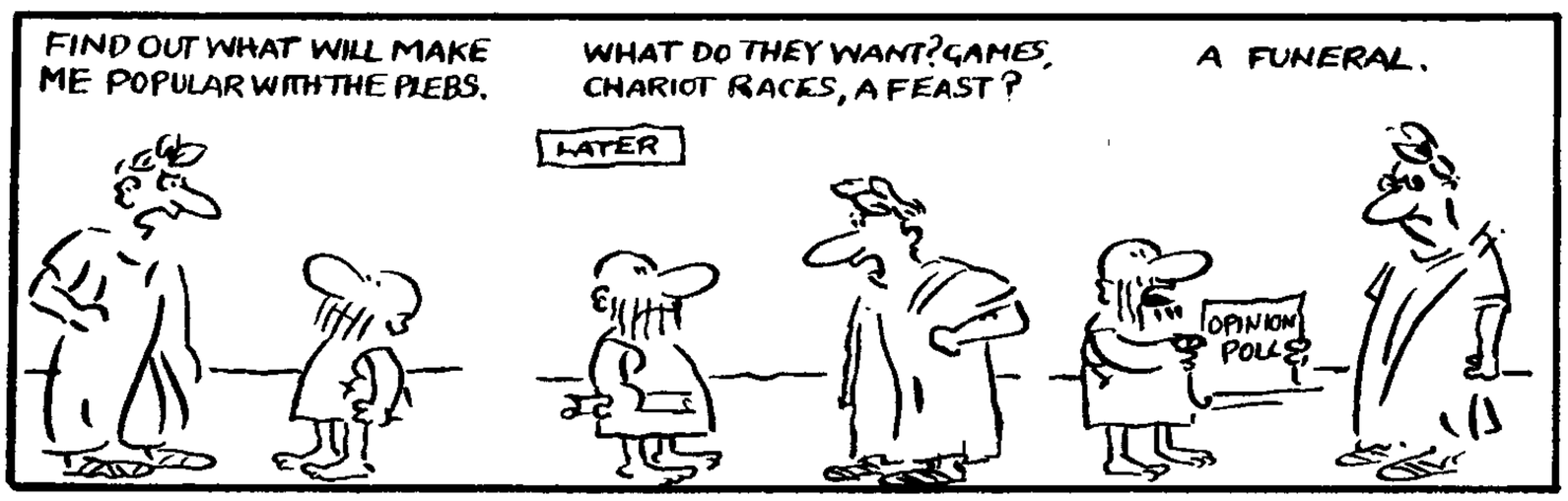
"Reverend John, who is living with an openly gay partner, is no doubt feeling rather sore today."
PAUL HANDLEY, Radio 5 Live
(Tim Bailey)

"I'm now in my 70th decade..."
THERESA GORMAN, BBC
(David Edwards)

"The people of Northern Ireland should step back and ask themselves have they moved on..."
TONY BLAIR, BBC
(Henry G. Wilson)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN


FIND OUT WHAT WILL MAKE ME POPULAR WITH THE PLEBS.
WHAT DO THEY WANT? GAMES, CHARIOT RACES, A FEAST?
A FUNERAL.
LATER
OPINION POLL

Letter from **Monrovia**

from Our Own Correspondent

THE Nigerians are back and we Monrovians are frankly glad to see them, just as we were the first time they came in 1990. We hope they will be able to restore order in our city so we won't be shelled by the armed gangs that call themselves government forces or freedom fighters. We need clean water and food.

Charles Taylor, meanwhile, has gone and most of us are glad since he has brought us nothing but misery. Some thought he was a real leader (Liberia was falling to pieces well before he started his war) and that the Americans and British never gave him a chance. But we're still arguing about that.

When the Nigerians first came, leading a West African peacekeeping force called ECOMOG, we thought it meant the end of the war. We didn't realise it would still be going 13 years later. Although ECOMOG saved lives, the Nigerians and some of our other West African peacekeepers began working with some of our own warlords who call themselves revolutionaries and saviours. The Nigerians sometimes sold them weapons, or Nigerian soldiers swapped their own ammunition for whatever the warlords had stolen. Hence we called ECOMOG Every Car or Moving Object Gone.

We don't blame ordinary Nigerian soldiers, who are pretty much like us. When they were first here some of the time they weren't paid, and plenty of them suffered in our war. It was the top brass, Nigerian politicians and generals, who were the problem. We hear some of them stole the money that was meant to pay their troops or for petrol for their vehicles. Some of them used the peacekeeping operation as a cover for smuggling oil.

We are still afraid the war is not yet over. We fear that the Nigerians will take over Monrovia, and that our politicians will then quarrel about who is to be the interim president and the interim minister, while they steal the money that is meant for our development. The Americans may not stay long. The rogues who call themselves leaders and revolutionaries will continue to use their private armies to rob us and ruin Liberia. The fact is that they get help to do this from some of our West African brothers.

The Americans are the ones who can save us. Our country was founded by Americans. They brought us civilization. In the old days, Liberia was famous among black Americans, who regarded it as their home from home, like New York Jews do with Israel. Our top people studied at their colleges, like Charles Taylor did. Some of our warlords even have American PhDs. During the cold war, Liberia was a US base. We even used the US dollar. We love Americans, although these days there are some who wonder whether they haven't fooled us. Some think America is plotting against us, and that when Taylor escaped from prison in Massachusetts in 1985, the CIA helped him. We don't know.

It certainly looks like the good old days have gone. Colin Powell seems to want to send in the marines, but the generals in the Pentagon are already anxious about US soldiers being killed in Iraq and they fear another Somalia, where 10 years ago US troops apparently on a humanitarian mission found themselves at war. But if the Americans don't come, we may not survive at all. Each town will be run by its own armed groups, and that will mean more suffering and more trouble for West Africa, because the boys who grow up with guns here are not afraid of going abroad to fight. So America had better act now or it will have to act later.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "It was Josiah Spode who really invented this back in the eighteenth century," Charles Krafft explained at a press conference in Seattle, "when he came up with the cattle bone and ash formula for bone china. The idea of Cremains is simply to take the idea to its logical conclusion, by incorporating cremated human remains into our pottery. Some people think it's in bad taste, but I believe that many Americans would like to preserve their loved ones as a ceramic work of art."

Krafft was explaining the concept behind his Cremains company, which specialises in making china knick-knacks from the ashes of cremated corpses. "We call the material Spone," he said, "and we've already made several customised pieces for bereaved clients. We mix part of the ashes with clay to make some sort of a reliquary, or container, and use that to store the rest of the ashes, so the piece is both decorative and practical. This one is a little pink figurine of the Hindu elephant God Ganesh, and this is a life-size model of a Second World War helmet. But my favourite so far is this model of an Absolut Vodka bottle, which was ordered by friends of David C. McCann, who drank himself to death at the age of fifty-one. At first, his friends wanted to make him into a plate and hang it on the wall, but in the end they thought he'd prefer to live for eternity in the same way he died, so they ordered the vodka bottle. It looks very realistic, and it contains real vodka too. Who knows? He may even end up in a museum." *(South Jersey News, 24/7/03. Spotter: Wallace Brown)*

—●—

● *"Dear Colleague, I am writing to tell you about a technical change to the corporate structure of the Girls' Day School Trust. You may be aware that the Trust currently consists of two separate companies, The Girls' Day School Trust (1872) and The Girls' Day School Trust. As from 1 September 2003, the Council has decided to concentrate all the activities of the Trust into a single company: the current Girls' Day School Trust (1872). However, for administrative convenience, this company will be renamed The Girls' Day School Trust, rather than The Girls' Day School Trust (1872).*

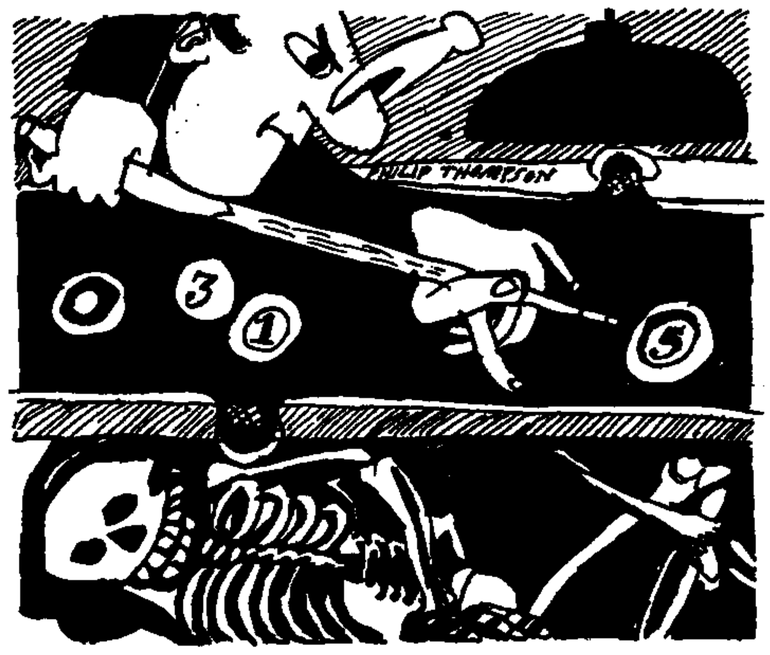
"Your contract of employment is with the company currently named The Girls' Day School Trust, and on 1 September 2003, it will automatically transfer to the company currently named The Girls' Day School Trust (1872), which at the same time will be renamed The Girls' Day School Trust. Therefore, although from 1 September you will technically be employed by another company, the name will remain the same.

"Yours sincerely, Barbara Harrison, Acting Chief Executive and Education Adviser, Girls' Day School Trust." (GDST internal newsletter. Spotter: Anon)

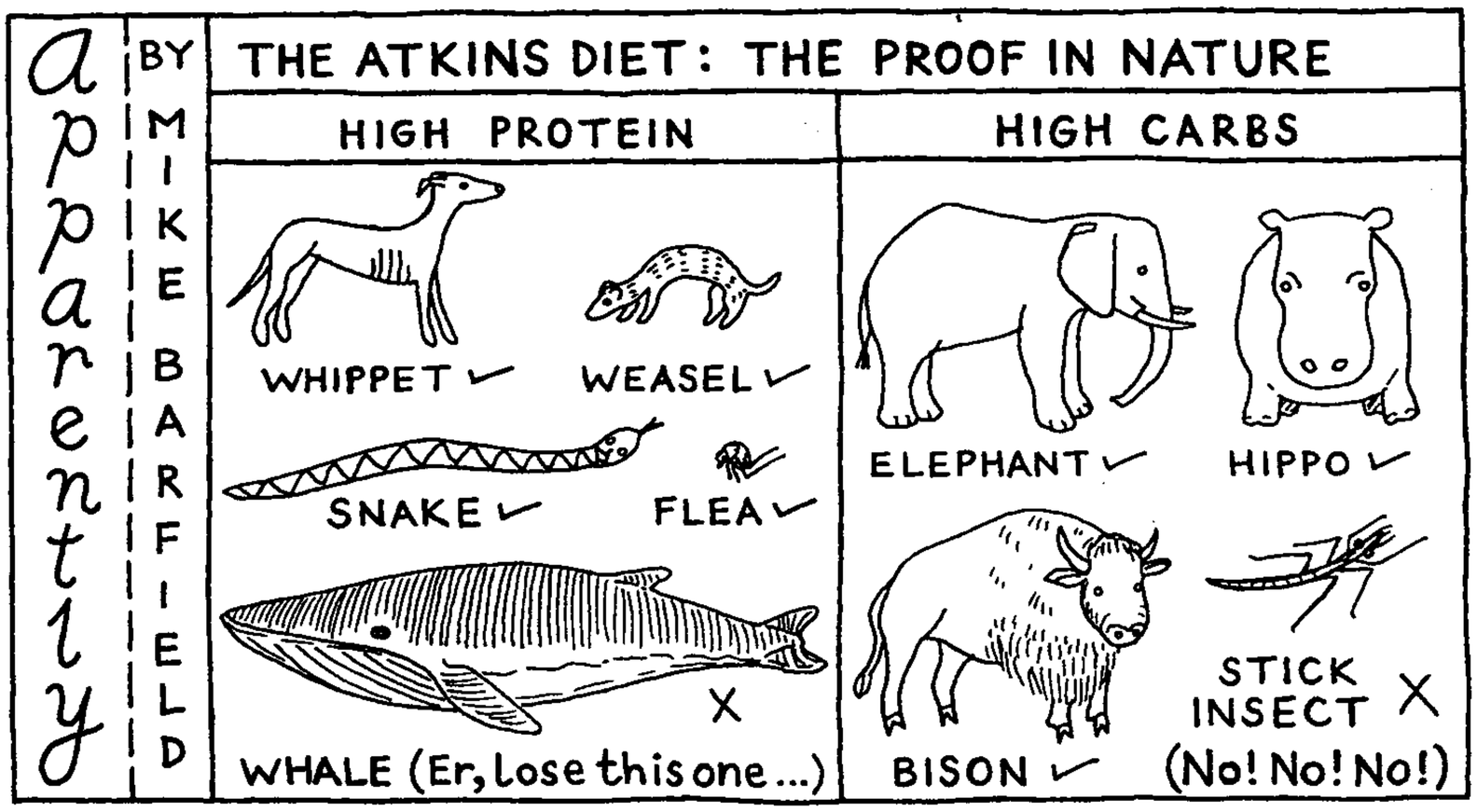
—●—

● "It seems that a guest in the motel noticed a foul smell in his room," police Sgt. Darin Snapp told reporters in Kansas City, "and after a day or so he complained to the staff. At first, they just told him to open a window, but the stench got worse, and he kept complaining that he could no longer tolerate the smell. Eventually, after it caused him to vomit, they agreed to send a cleaning crew to his room, and when they began moving the furniture around, that's when they found the dead body."

Sgt. Snapp was explaining how the decomposing body of a man had come to be found in a room at the Capri Motel, east of downtown Kansas City. "No formal identification has yet been made, but the motel manageress thinks it's the body of the previous occupant of the room. She hadn't seen the man for several days,



and assumed that he'd run off without paying, so she rented the room out to a new guest. The dead man, wearing only a nun's wimple and fishnet tights, was under the bed. The cleaning crew found it when they lifted the mattress, but you wonder how on earth they'd missed it when they'd prepared the room earlier, because the body was putrefying. The Capri has been closed down several times in the past for indecency and poor hygiene, and their cleaning routine clearly leaves a lot to be desired. But on the other hand, it is a very competitively priced motel with many facilities, including a gym and a pool table." *(Fredericksburg News, 14/7/03. Spotter: Mike McEvoy)*



ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

LADY MOSLEY

(This interview was given shortly before her death at the age of 106)

Lady Mosley, you've enjoyed a long and eventful life. Can you recall your earliest memory of a spoon?

Oh yes, quite vividly. My sister Nancy used to call them "spoo-spoos". One day Unity hit Nanny Titmarsh over the head with a copper spoon that Cook used for making damson jam, and poor old Nanny dropped dead. Parve was furious and we were all shut up in the nursery for the whole afternoon.

In the 1920s you and your sisters were among the Bright Young Things. Did spoons play a part in that giddy social whirl?

Oh, good heavens, yes! Evelyn [Waugh] and I were photographed once by Cecil [Beaton] for the publication of his novel *Vile Bodies*, which was originally to be called *Put Out More Spoons* – something Parve used to shout at the butler when an unexpected guest arrived for luncheon at Rackets. That's where we lived.

Then after 1933 you met some even more interesting people. Were they spoon-related in any way?

Oh yes. When I left my first husband Booby [the 14th Marquess of Ballywealthy], I married Oswald Mosley in our friend Joseph Goebbels's villa in Berlin. My friend Hitler was there and as a wedding present he gave us a wonderful set of gold spoons decorated with eagles and swastikas and that sort of thing. I still use them. We only found out later that they'd been specially made out of some gold that once belonged to some Jewish people, which is sad. But so many sad things have happened, haven't they?

You were a great friend in France of your fellow exile, the Duke of Windsor. Did he share your love of spoons?

Oh yes, he was passionate about them. He even designed one himself, the Windsor Soup Spoon. I'm sure you've heard of it?

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

Ha, ha, ha! What a clever question! You young people are marvellous.

NEXT WEEK: Gerald Scarfe – "Me and my Scarf".

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S SEXED-UP SIZZLER!!!

Kylie Minogue

■ **KEN MACDONALD!!?? Doesn't it make you want to throw up??!? The idea that Britain's Number One Legal Beagle is a convicted Dope Addict!!!?! What does that say about us in Britain today???! When the DPP should be locked up behind bars??!? Director of Public Prosecutions??!?! Don't make me laugh, mister!!?!!? Drug dealer and pot peddler, more like it!!?!?**

■ HATS and everything else off to Ken Macdonald!!! He's the new DPP – stooopid!!!! OK, so he sold a few joints to his mates when he was at Oxford!!?!? Who didn't???! Those were the days when all us Bright Young Things were busy a-puffin', a-sniffin' and a-spliffin'!!?!? Come off it, Mr Killjoy!!! Ken was just having himself a bit of fun, okay??!? Don't lay a heavy trip on the geezer, man!!?!? Like, wow!!!!? Geddit????!?

■ *SO ULRIKA's tied the knot at last!!?!? Who cares????!*

■ **AND ALEX BEST has walked out on Boozy George again!!?!! Ditto!!?!**

■ HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Heatwave Hunks!!!

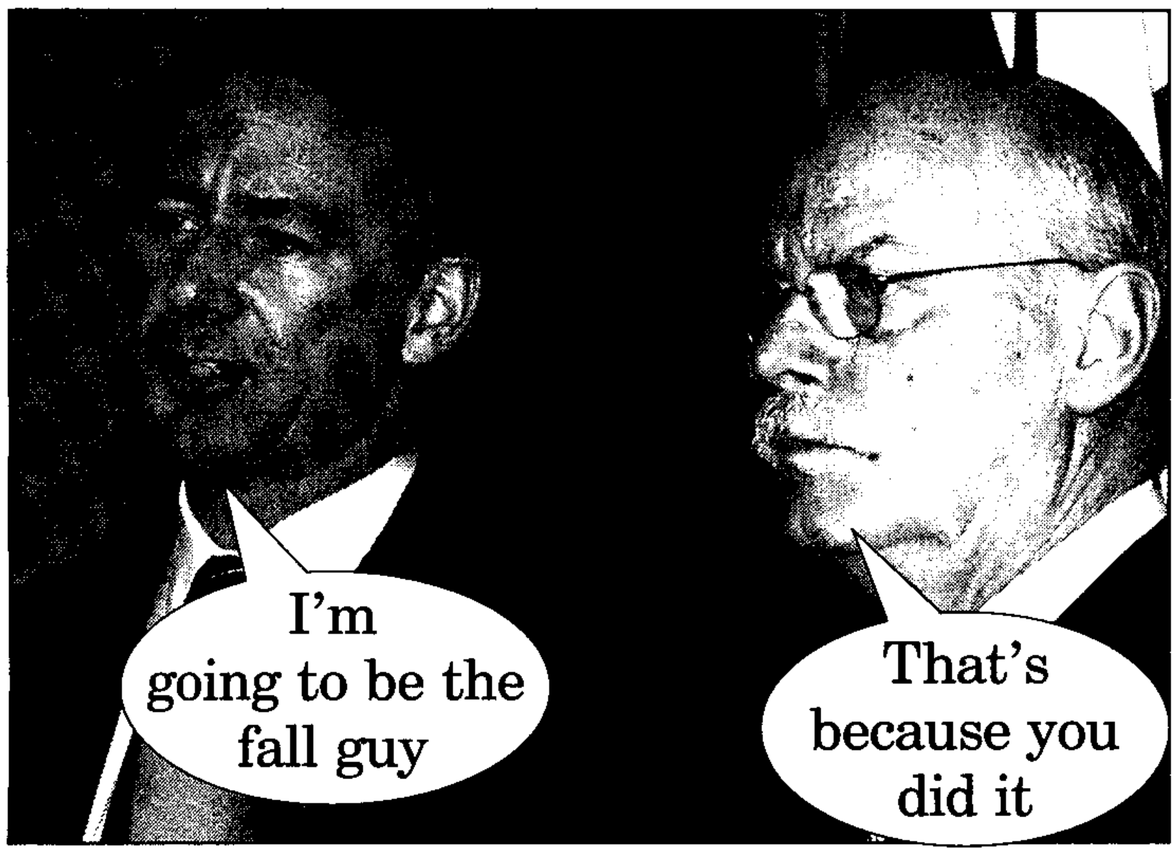
● **Roman Abramovich** – Chelsea's Mister Moneybags from Moscow!!? You won't have to spend millions to sign ME up, Comrade!!?!?

● **Lord Hutton** – You can investigate my secret dossier any time you like, Your Lordship!!?! Geddit???!?

● **SIMON SEBAG MONTEFIORE** – Crazy name, crazy guy!!!!!??!

Byeeee!!!

HOON TO GO?



IDI AMIN

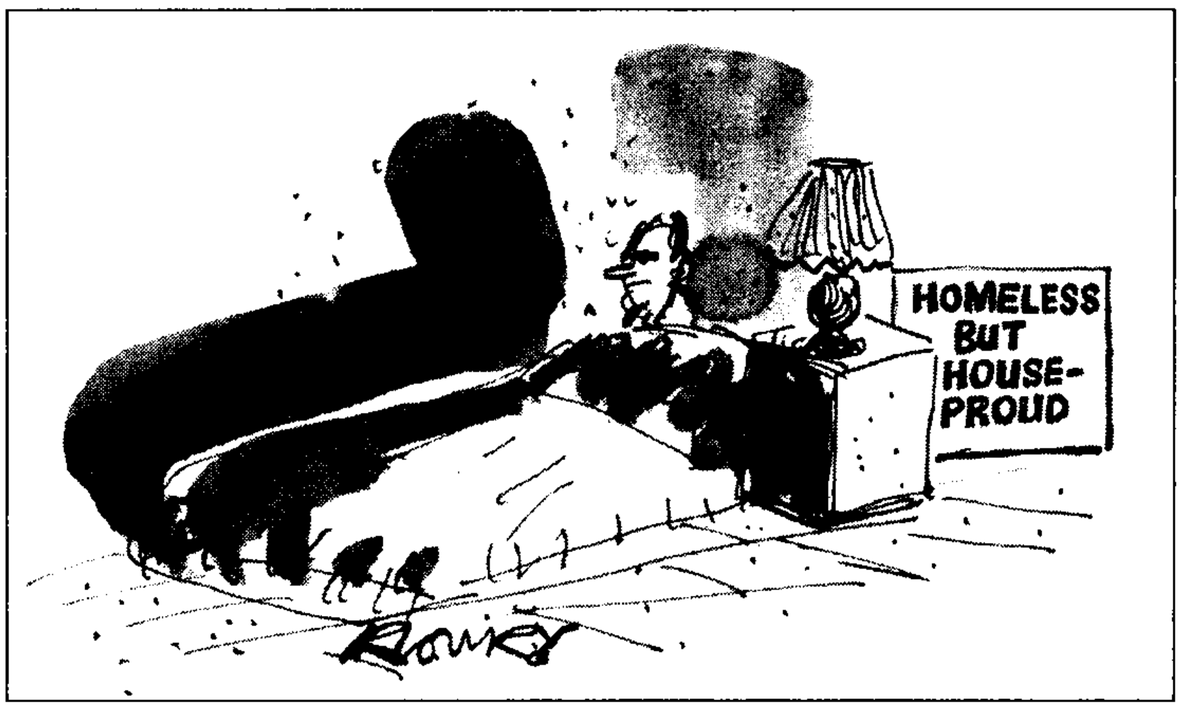
by the late **Diana Mosley**

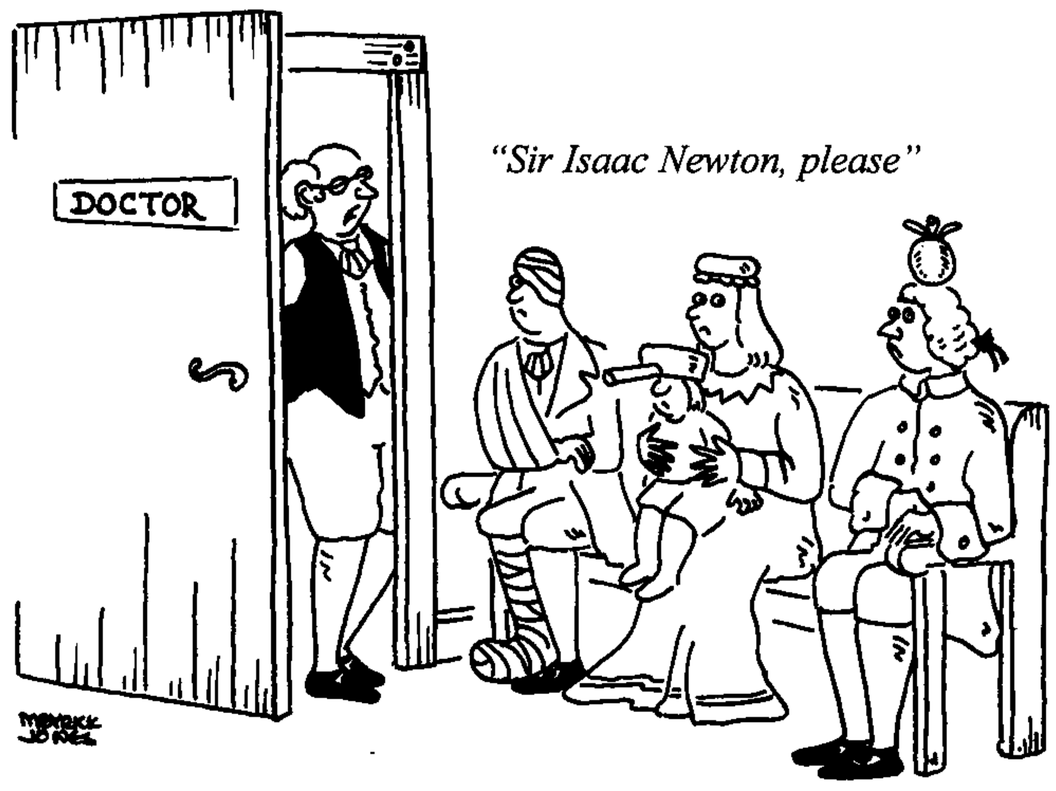
I WAS lucky enough to meet Amin Dada on several occasions in the company of my dear sister Lunacy.

Idi had the most delightful manners and beautiful brown eyes that bewitched me.

Of course, we now know that he did the most terrible things. But don't we all?

© *The Estate of the late Lady Hitler*





"Sir Isaac Newton, please"

EDINBURGH HIGHLIGHTS

What You'll Want To Miss

COMEDY

Vijay O'Murphy, Dublin-born Perrier-Award nominated Hindu stand-up comedian with a sideways look at the Hutton Enquiry.

★*Venue: The Brillo NCP Carpark 4, 968 Andrew Neil Street.*

ART

'A Vanishing World', photographs of Glasgow's now-threatened manhole covers by industrial photographers **Shuna McFrew** and **Hugo Griswold**.

★*Venue: 7694: The Lord Macdonald Memorial Hall, Dewar St, Mon-Fri.*

THEATRE

Celebrated **Uzbekistan National Theatre of Mime** production of Hamlet on stilts.

★*Venue: 8414 Left Luggage Office, Platform 4, Waverley Station.*

LATE-NIGHT CABARET

TV's Kirsty

An evening with Kirsty Wark Newsnight presenter Kirsty with an offbeat take on life outside television. Musical interludes with humorous skiffle-combo **Instant Coffee**.

★*Venue: 7246, Bob Paisley Methodist Hall, Royal Kilometre.*

JAZZ

The **Mutt & Jeff Duo** (bass and drums). Jazz standards from Harlow New Town's acclaimed Men of Harlow. "These boys are hot!" *(Jazz and Jazzmen)*

★*Venue: 8741 Upstairs at The Bearded Man, Billy Connolly Crescent* (That's enough Edinburgh Festival. Ed.)

COMING SOON IN THE EYE

Cristina Odone writes on the joy of producing an article about childbirth.

'It was a long and painful process but it was worth it in the end – to hold in my arms a beautiful 500 pound cheque.'

A 'Gnometrash' article

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hi!

And it's great to be back at the vicarage!

It's all very well leaving John in charge of the parish, and let me be the first to say that, for someone who hasn't had the benefit of a first-class education, he's done a "reet good job"!

But the fact remains that the holidays are now over, in all senses of the word, and it's time to get down to the serious job of sorting out the parish for a new year!

And when I say "serious", that's what I mean – not all the rubbish that poor Mr Hutton, our much-respected legal adviser, is having to listen to in the parish hall!

I mean the real business of the parish, such as stopping the local media getting above themselves and writing tittle-tattle about the tragic death of our much-loved local doctor, Dr Kelly.

But that leads me to the ridiculous requests I found waiting for me when Cherie and I and the family got home, pretty exhausted from our hard-working three weeks on the beach in Barbados, that I of all people should offer some kind of apology for the fact that poor Dr Kelly was described by someone as a "Walter Mitty".

Let's think for a moment, shall we, what that means. Who was Walter Mitty? I hear you ask.

He was a much-admired American a long time ago, and he was so famous that they made a film about him. And what was the reason why he was so special?

Because he had the courage to dream! And what's wrong with that? Where would we be in this world without dreamers?

Was Martin Luther King ashamed of having a dream? When Joseph saved the Middle East with his dreams back in Biblical Times, did anyone ask him to apologise for it?

And I can tell you this. What's good enough for Martin Luther King is certainly good enough for your Vicar!

Yes, I too have dreams, I don't mind admitting! And let me tell you about one or two of them.

I dream of a world where war is no more – even though it may take a war (or two) to bring this about!

And in my dream I see two men walking across this new Eden, through fields of flowers, into the sunset. One of them, of course, is our good friend, the Rev. Dubya, of the First Church of the Latter-Day Morbombs – and the other, dare I say it, is your Vicar!

And I have another dream, for our friend in Tesco, who never seems to be much interested in all my successful missions to other countries outside England!

In this dream, one man walks through the familiar, much-loved streets of St Albion's, and what he sees is a parish where everyone is grateful to him for what he has achieved in his long years as Vicar. (Seven years! Longer than any incumbent in history since the Rev. Major!):

- happy smiling children waving their record number of 'A' Level passes
- old-age pensioners dancing out of the doors of our new Foundation Cottage Hospital, after their successful, waiting list-free hip operations
- hundreds of trains arriving punctually at bus stops throughout the parish and vice versa
- reformed teenage yobs helping old people across the road and offering them a full acupuncture-and-massage service, thanks to their NVQs in alternative therapies.

But hang on! You're ahead of me! You're saying "That's not a dream, Vicar. That's the parish we're living in today, thanks to all that you've achieved in the past seven years."

And what does that prove? That I'm a man of action who gets things done, not some dopey fantasist stuck in a world of make-believe, like that fool Walter Mitty! (No offence, Walt!)

Yours (back to reality!)

Tony

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

I was utterly sickened by

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Glenda Jackson
The Old Greenroom,
Hampstead Road.

The Editor reserves the right to shorten all letters from mad, menopausal women who used to be famous and now can't hack it. A.C.

A Message From The Editor

Once again, I have to warn readers of this newsletter that I will not tolerate any suggestion that I in any way tried to "sex up" the Vicar's sermons on the need for war as the only way to achieve true peace.

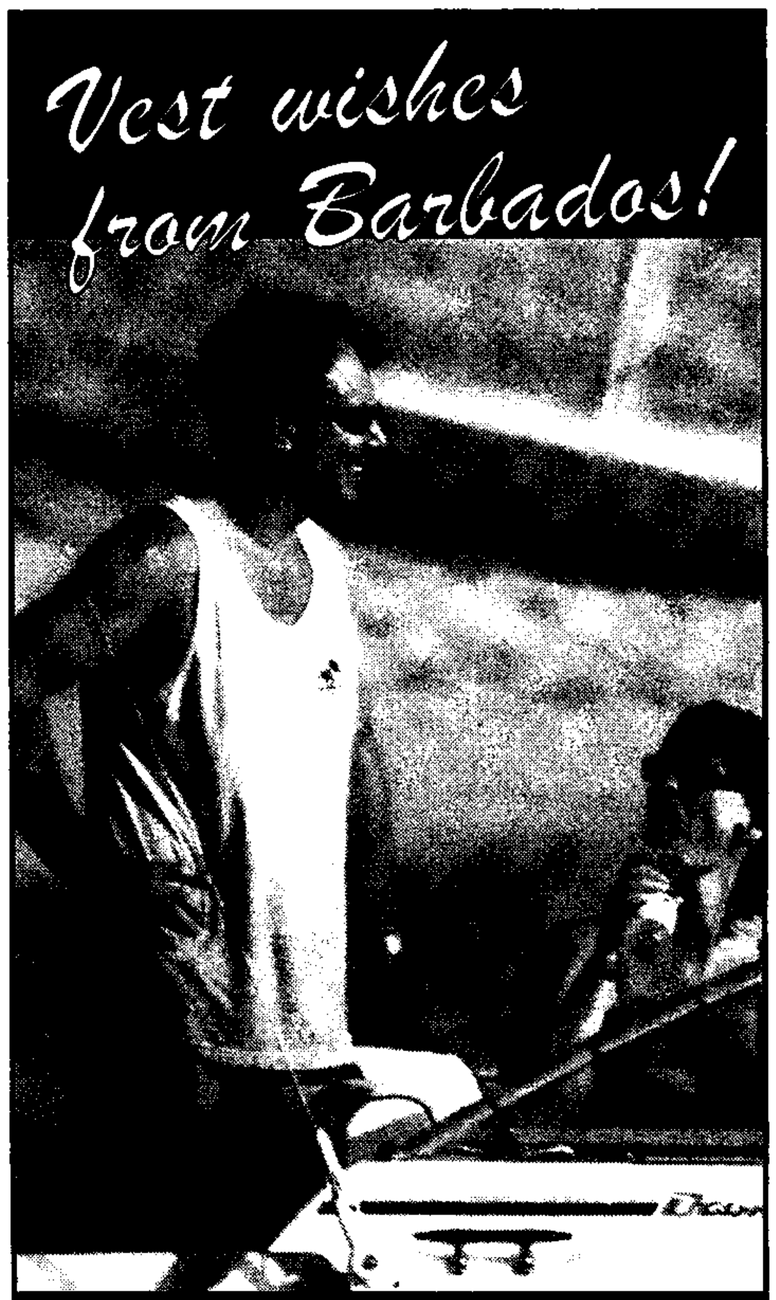
Some scumbags around the parish don't seem to be able to get it into their thick heads that I have done nothing wrong whatever. In any possible way. Do you hear me, you scum?

You can say what you like about the Vicar, and that mad wife of his (and her even madder friend Carole Dipstick), let alone the Vicar's queeny friend, the one who used to be Churchwarden until they had to fire him for taking bribes from members of our Asian business community, not to mention his stupid bloody Millennium Tent idea – where was I? Oh yes, you can say what you like about all that bunch of no-hopers in the vicarage, but don't try it on with me, sunshine.

Got that, Mr Gilligan? Got that, Mr Hutton? Got that, all the rest of you bastards out there?

This time it's personal. And if I go, get this straight. It's going to be at a time of my choosing, and no one else's – ie, when I have been totally exonerated by the Vicar's friend Mr Hutton. OK?

The Editor, A. Campbell.



Download the rest of the vicar's holiday snaps from the St Albion's website: www.stalbions.co.uk

Daily Mail

FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 2003

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

"My 3-year-old daughter got 12 'A's at A level. Why won't snooty Cambridge accept her for medicine?" – A mother writes, **page 94**

CAN READING THE MAIL GIVE YOU CANCER?

By Our Medical Staff **Dr Atkins**

A NEW study has shown a definite link between reading the Daily Mail and getting cancer.

Scientists now believe that the Mail is an active carcinogen, raising levels of stress and worry among its readers to such a point that they trigger the growth of cancerous cells.

Dangerous Rubbish

Writing in the prestigious medical journal *Scares and Scaremongers*, Dr Hackenbusch of the University of New Rothermere claims that four out of every 10 people who regularly read the Daily Mail will die of cancer.

What happens is that the typical reader begins by worrying about dieting and health problems, then progresses to chronic anxiety induced by reading articles about rising crime and illegal immigrants.

The reader finally succumbs to suicidal depression triggered by yet another forecast of house prices.

Hysterical Lies

At this point, the Mail reader's immune system breaks down, and he or she soon sinks into a coma which can only end in death.

Those Dangerous Diets In Full

The Atkinson Diet
NON-STOP diet of Mr Bean, can cause extreme weariness and lethargy, particularly on short-haul flights at this time of year.

The Anne Atkins Diet
NON-STOP diet of silly agony aunt pieces in the Daily Telegraph, can cause immediate irritation and nausea.

The Aitken Diet
NON-STOP diet of prison food, leads to dramatic loss of weight and the shedding of millions of pounds.

The Nutkin Diet
NON-STOP diet of high protein nuts, can lead to development of bushy tail and a tendency to tree dwelling.

The Nutcase Diet
NON-STOP diet of steak, bacon and eggs, can cause death by boredom in those having to read about it endlessly in the newspapers.

6. Have you ever been a victim of crime on the Railway?
Yes ☐ (Go to Q7)
No ☐ (Go to Q8)

7. Did you report the crime?
Yes ☐ (Go to Q9)
No ☐ (Go to Q8)

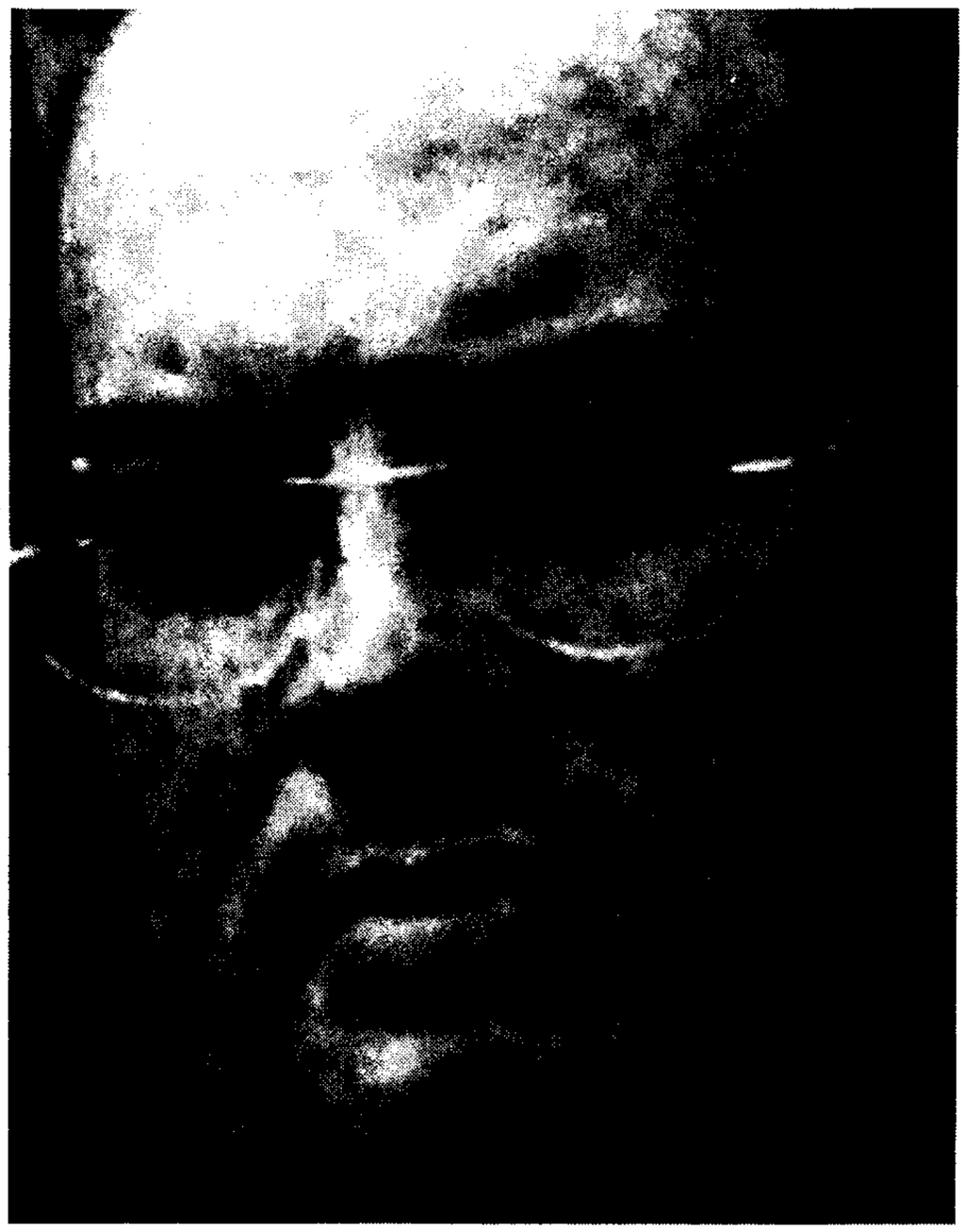
8. Why not?

Metro

IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT...
YOU'VE OVER-DONE THE DRESSING DOWN ON FRIDAYS SIMPKINS!
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY LONGER! I'M STRIPPING OFF!
YOU KNOW THE RULE! ONE PAPER CUP A DAY!
I TOLD YOU TO WEAR A SUN HAT!
MY TATTOOS! MY TATTOOS ARE MELTING!
HIS NIPPLE RINGS GOT RED HOT!
HEATH

THE Times

IS IT TIME FOR LIAR GILLIGAN TO COMMIT SUICIDE?



Guilty Man

By **Trevor Grovellagh**

AFTER only one day of the Hutton inquiry, one thing is clear.

The BBC must be closed down immediately and all the licence-fee income given to Sky.

Yesterday, under relentless cross-examination, the fat, sweaty toad Gilligan finally broke down and admitted the following:

- **His story was correct.**
- **It was corroborated by his colleague Sue Wattsthefuss.**
- **The BBC is a disgrace and should be closed down and all the licence-fee income paid to Sky.** *(You've done this bit, Ed.)*

No wonder that Alastair Campbell and Tony Blair are over the moon at their total vindication by Murdoch newspapers. *(Surely the Hutton inquiry?! Ed.)*

Surely it cannot be long now before those weapons of mass destruction turn up in Mr Gilligan's bedroom? ***Full story: pages 2-16.***

There's More Of This In The Sun!

"She hasn't been quite the same since she posed for our fundraising calendar"

Mr Winsor's other missive yesterday was an attempt to put the brakes on Notwork Rail, whose annual spending he wants down from £6 billion to £4 billion within five years. *Daily Telegraph*

Network Rail

IMPROVING YOUR RAILWAY

AS PART of our ongoing programme of enhancing our customer travel service, the entire railway network will be shut down from 1 September 2003 until 3 January 2011.

This is to enable vital engineering works to be completed with minimum disruption to passengers.

Alternative travel services have been arranged by sea.

For full details consult our customer service www.notavailable.com, or ring our permanently engaged customer helpline number in Hyderabad: 080704124136

MAKING YOUR RAILWAY WORK FOR US

The Hutton Inquiry

Day 94

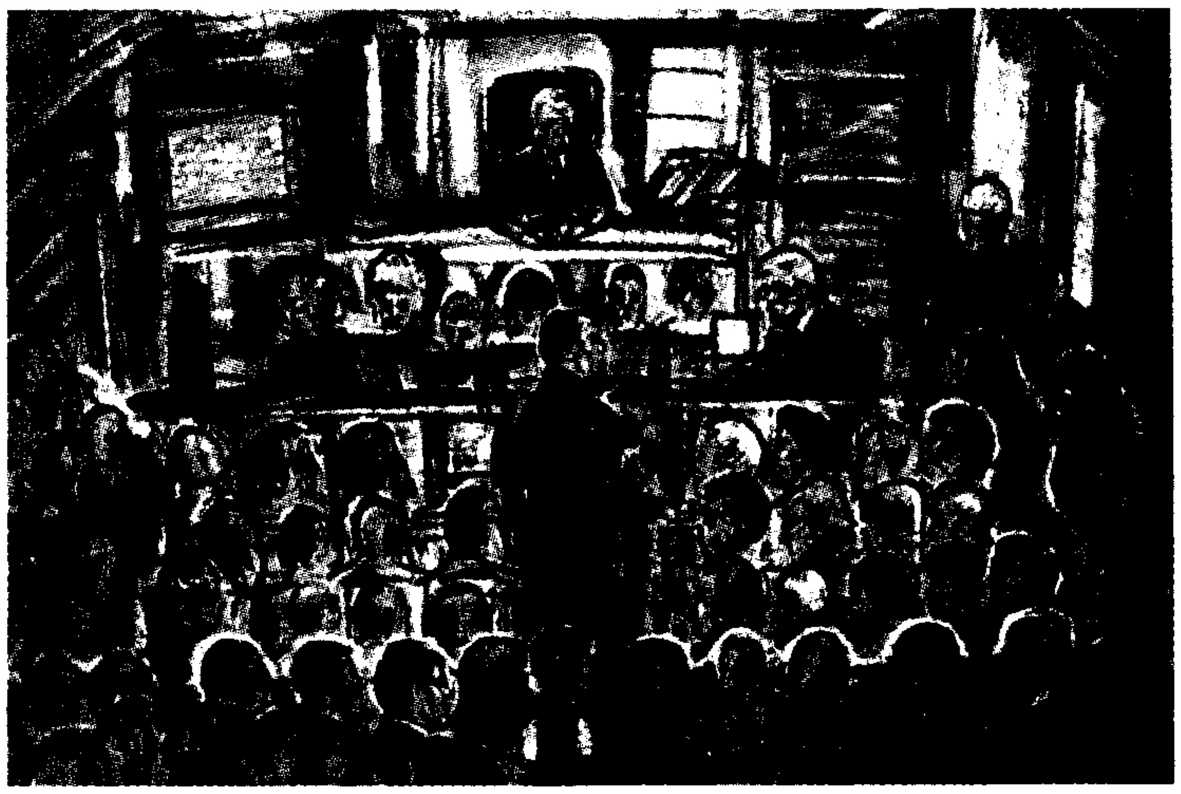
AS LORD Hutton's inquiry into the events surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly, the government scientist at the heart of the *(We know all this – get on with it. Ed.)*

The inquiry yesterday heard the evidence of a Ministry of Defence official, Mr Kevin Paperclip, who was in charge of interdepartmental liaison between the Joint Defence Intelligence Committee (JDIC) and the department's Strategic Intelligence Assessment Unit (SIAU).

Answering questions from Mr Andrew Earnalot Q.C., Mr Paperclip said he had no direct knowledge of the so-called "sexed up" dossier, but he had been briefed on "more than one occasion" by the head of the Defence Intelligence Co-ordination Committee (DICC).

Earnalot: Was it, or was it not, your impression, Mr Paperclip, that the second dossier had been rewritten following the meeting on 24 January on which we heard evidence yesterday.

Paperclip: It may well have been. I cannot honestly recall.



A dramatic moment during the evidence of Keith Filingcabinet

Hugefee: Are you seriously expecting this inquiry to believe that you cannot remember?

Paperclip: I have accessed my 'palm-top' diary for the day in question, but the only data I have been able to retrieve was an urgent memorandum from Mrs Paperclip reminding me to purchase three tins of Whiskas on my way home.

Lord Hutton: We have heard a good deal about this 'palm-top' device, Mr Earnalot. Could you perhaps enlighten us as to what this term refers to?

Earnalot: I understand, m'lud, that it is a type of cat food.

Huttoncarrot: I am indebted to you.

(The inquiry continues)

Hutton – The Timetable of Terror

FOR THE first time, the inquiry yesterday managed to pin down the exact sequence of events which led up to the accusation that Alastair Campbell had asked for a redrafting of the memorandum which related to the inclusion in the dossier of 14 January a reference to "45 minutes" as the time it would take Mr Paperclip to pick up a tin of Whiskas on his way home from Whitehall to 147 Valerie Grove, Blackheath.

2.36 pm Mohammed Nodes, a retail display manager employed by the New Cross branch of Londis, restacks shelves in the pet food department with tins of Whiskas.

3.15 pm Mr Paperclip leaves War Office to catch No. 12 bus.

(That's enough 'Timetable of Terror'. Ed.)

THAT HUTTON VERDICT

What You Will Hear

... very sad... tragic events... blame on both sides... on the one hand... on the other... failures of communication... ambiguous reporting... government spin... time to take stock... Kelly still very much dead...

© Sir Leonard Hutton (178 not out)

The Memo That Rocked the BBC

AMONG yesterday's witnesses was Mr Sam Brook, the Deputy Head of the BBC Bi-Medial News and Current Affairs Analysis Unit, who told Lord Hutton that, on 24 May, he had sent a memo to the Assistant Chief of the News-gathering (Politics) Liaison Group, drawing attention to the internal memo by Miss Susan Watts-thestory to the Executive Producer of Newsnight (Science and Current Affairs) asking for clarification of the guidelines relating to 'the use of dictaphone machines in an evidential context'.

The inquiry heard that the e-mail reply to Ms Wattsitallabout had been lost due to an administrative error.

The Wattsit Tape In Full

Sue Watts: Hullo, Dr Kelly? Did you hear the Today programme yesterday?

Kelly: Hi, Sue, I certainly did and I might have a bit of a story for you on that.

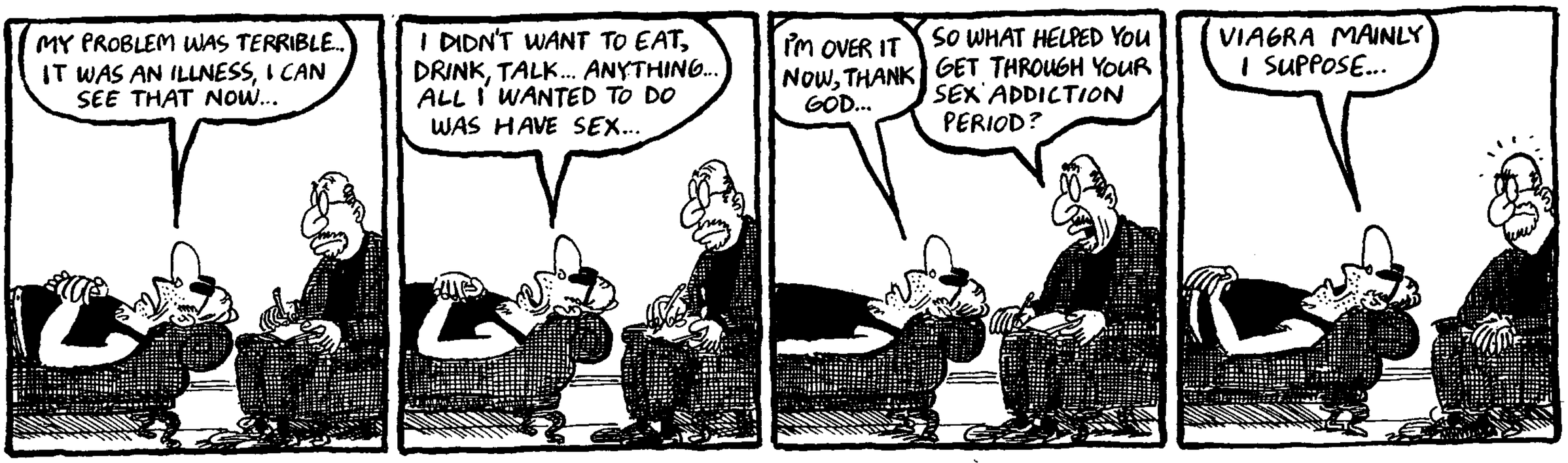
Watts: Really?

Kelly: Yes, apparently this dossier, it was sexed-up a bit, probably by this Campbell chap at Number 10.

Watts: No, I don't think so. But thanks for letting me know. I've got to go now to pick up some cat food before the shops shut.

Celeb

LIGGER


MY PROBLEM WAS TERRIBLE.. IT WAS AN ILLNESS, I CAN SEE THAT NOW...
I DIDN'T WANT TO EAT, DRINK, TALK... ANYTHING... ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS HAVE SEX...
I'M OVER IT NOW, THANK GOD...
SO WHAT HELPED YOU GET THROUGH YOUR SEX ADDICTION PERIOD?
VIAGRA MAINLY I SUPPOSE...

Heatwave Round-Up

80-90-100!

by **Phil Space**

YES, IT'S official. Britain yesterday experienced a record number of pieces about how hot it is. The highest recorded number of articles was in the Daily Mail at exactly 101 (the most this century). It was closely followed by the Daily Telegraph (100.5), the Sun (99) and the Daily Mirror (98.4). The lowest recorded figure was in the Guardian with a mere 56.8 pieces (including an in-depth analysis of how all the other papers were covering the heatwave).

Said one holidaymaker, enjoying the articles in Great Yarmouth, "It's almost unbearable. I like pictures of semi-naked girls in fountains as much as the next man, but I'm not sure I can take it any longer."

And the Press Complaints Authority warned, "There's more to come".

80-90-100!

by **Phillipa Column**

YES, IT'S official. 100% of 'A' Level candidates in Britain have now passed the exam with flying colours. The highest recorded figure was in St Paul's Girls School in North London where the pass rate reached an astonishing 111% and even girls who didn't take the exam have scored A* in all subjects. And the government warned, "There's more to come".

80-90-100!

by **Phil Tufnell**

YES, IT'S official. The England cricket team has broken all the records, scoring 100 in a single innings.

And the English Cricket Board warned, "There's no more to come".

80-90-100!

by **Phil Paper**

YES, IT'S official. Bill Deedes has broken all the records by writing about the weather at the age of 100 and *(That's enough. Ed.)*

"Hi, coats in there, drinks and food over there and there's a councillor in the front bedroom if anyone needs one"

NEW CURE FOR COUGH FOUND

by **Sir Thomas Beecham-Powder**

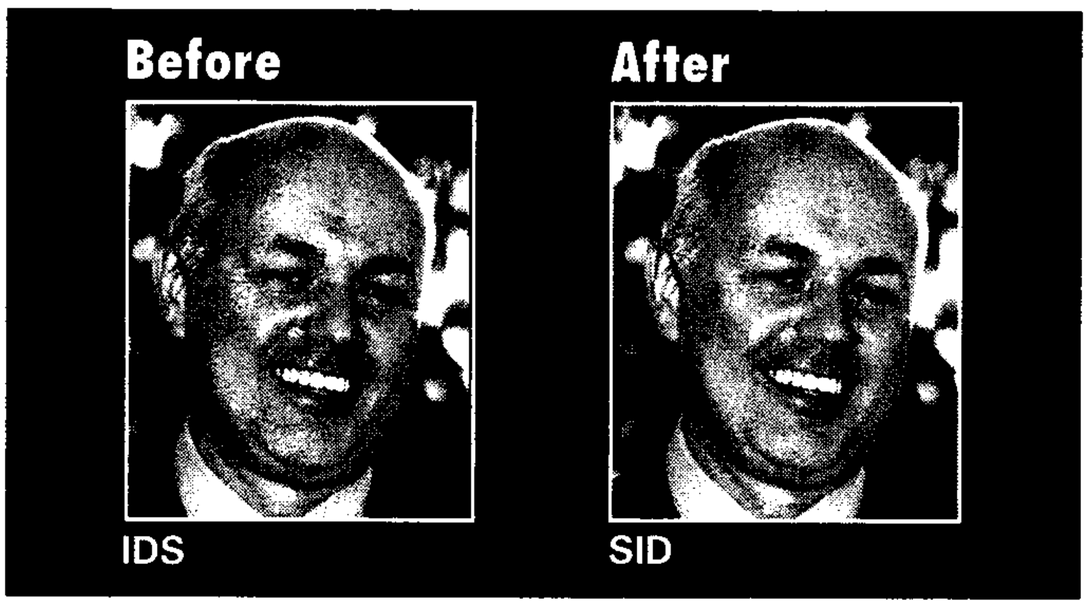
SOME of Britain's top makeover specialists have been working round the clock to transform the leader of the opposition, Mr Iain Duncan Cough.

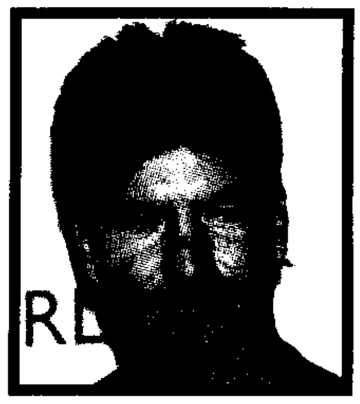
Every detail of the way he talks and walks has been changed, after feeding 10,000 details of Mr Cough's appearance and mannerisms into a computer.

The result, as can be seen below, is an astonishing transformation.

Gone is the dim, anonymous-looking, bald man with a cough who, for months, has won the lowest poll ratings in the history of the Conservative Party.

Now the former IDS will be projected to voters as 'SID', an attractive, bald man, with an engaging cough, and the benefit of not being over-exposed in the media.





THOSE AMAZING SIMON COWELL PUT-DOWNS IN FULL

YES, he's back! The wittiest, rudest man on TV. Pop Idol's Mr Nasty is on our screens again with his acid tongue and his withering comments on the hopeful pop wannabees.

Here they are, a selection of Simon's vituperative verbal volleys!

■ *(To sad boy)*
"You're not a very good singer, are you?"

■ *(To sad girl)*
"You're not a very good singer either."

■ *(To next sad boy)*
"Your voice is worse than someone who isn't a very good singer."

■ *(To next sad girl)*
"Your voice makes the other not very good singer look like a good singer, which she isn't."

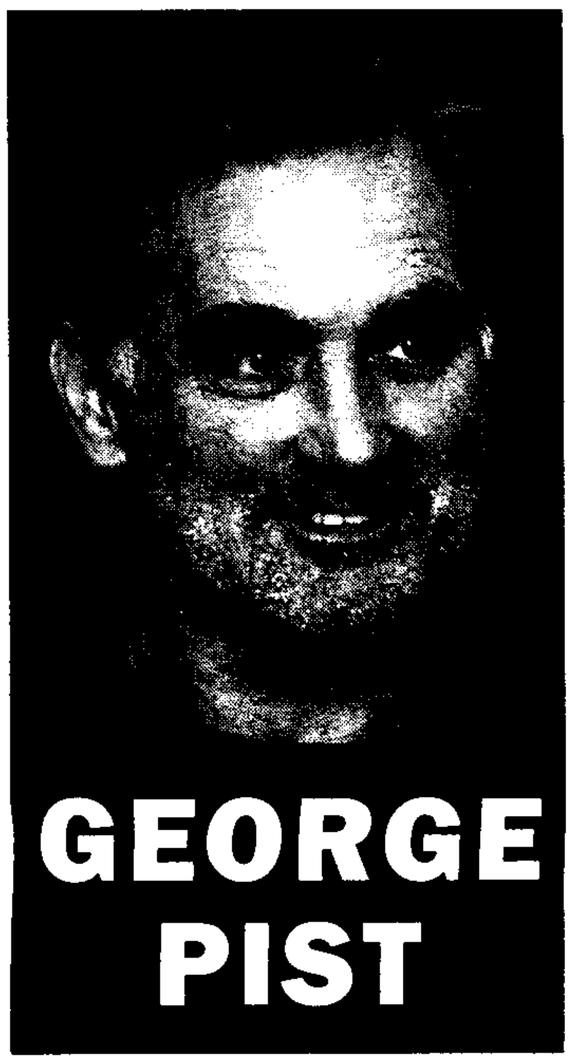
And, rudest of all, Simon's offensive dismissal that had Tracy Nargs in tears after she sang a cover version of Kylie Minogue's *Can't Get Your Bum Out Of My Head*:

Simon: ***Well, Tracy, you're almost as talentless as me.***

© *All newspapers.*

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD
WELL OF COURSE I DON'T THINK I CAN BUY THE PREMIERSHIP..
ABRAMOVICH
THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS MAKING SURE THE PLAYERS GEL AS A TEAM...
WHO YOU TALKING TO SMALL CHANGE?
PISS OFF, CHELSEA GOT YOU ON THE CHEAP!
VERON
£15M
COLE £6·6M
DUFF
£17M
GUYS, GUYS, I'M WORTH THE MOST HERE



GEORGE PIST

The *Mail On Sunday*'s top columnist inexplicably writes every week in the *Mail*'s Night and Day Magazine.

The United States' Decision To Intervene In Liberia

● **What's your** problem, pal? You looking at me, you bastard? ... I love you... you're my best friend...

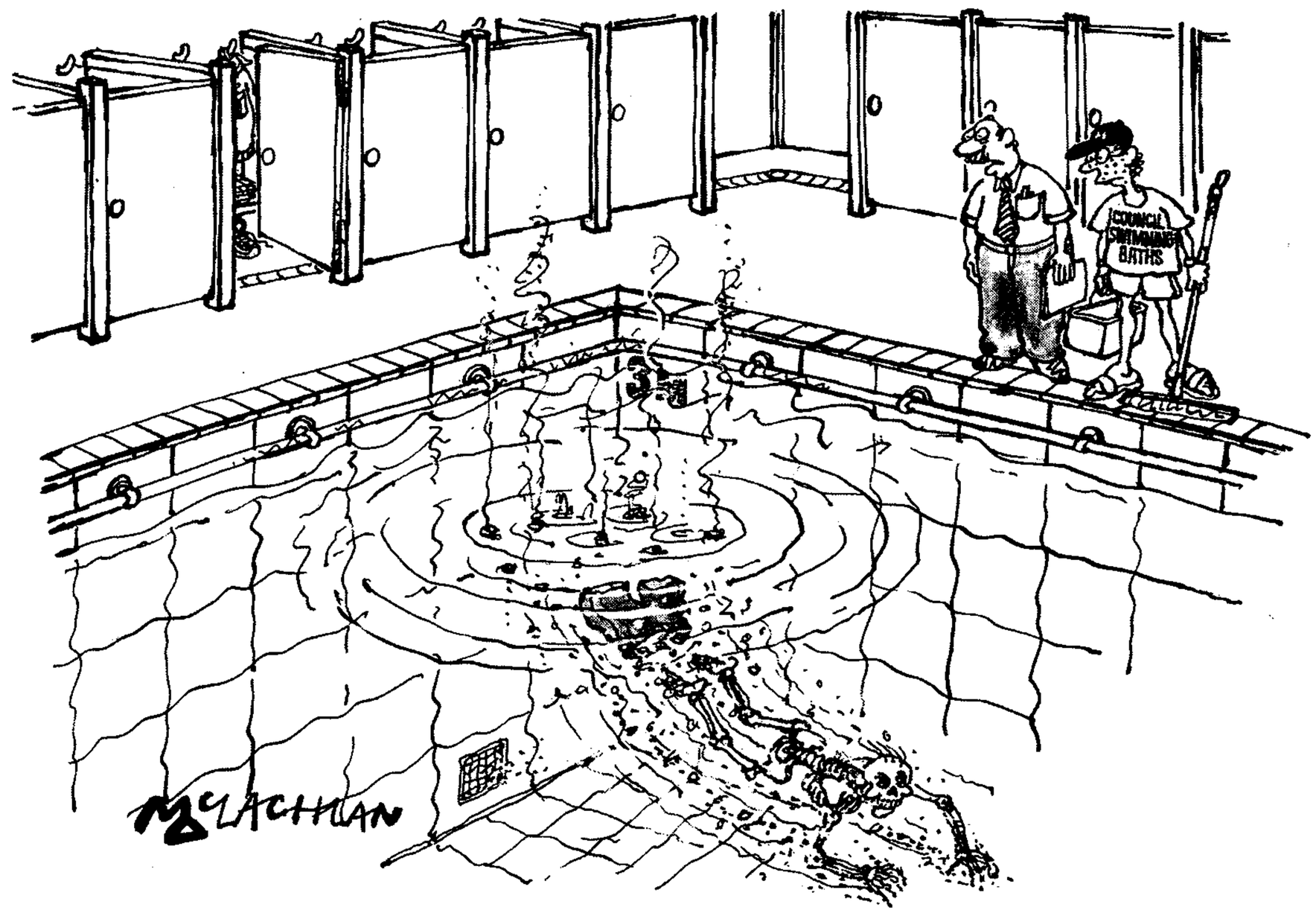
Lessons To Be Learned From The Kelly Inquiry

● **I tell you** something... I tell you something... I don't need a drink... I can handle it... Make that a double, barman... where am I?

Is The Novel Dead? Thoughts On The Booker Prize

● **I belong to** Glasgae... dear old... Shut yer face, yer bastard... do you know who I am?... Nor do I?

© Drunk Night And Day, The-Mail-On-Shunday-Or-Is-It-Thurshday-I-Don't-Know



"Too much chlorine in the baths again, Thomson"

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH Friday, August 22, 2003

Letters to the Editor

Lapse in taste

SIR – I do not expect to purchase my copy of the Daily Telegraph only to find the front page is filled with a picture of an old lady. I refer, of course, to the recent lamentable edition which featured a photograph of the late Lady Diana Hitler at the age of 106. If the Telegraph cannot find pictures of Lady Hurley, Kylie Minogue or, at the very least, some sixth-formers from a respectable girls' school celebrating their 5 A grades at 'A' Level by jumping in the air and exposing their midriffs, then I for one will no longer be buying it.

Sir Herbert Gusset
The Old Fascist, Berks

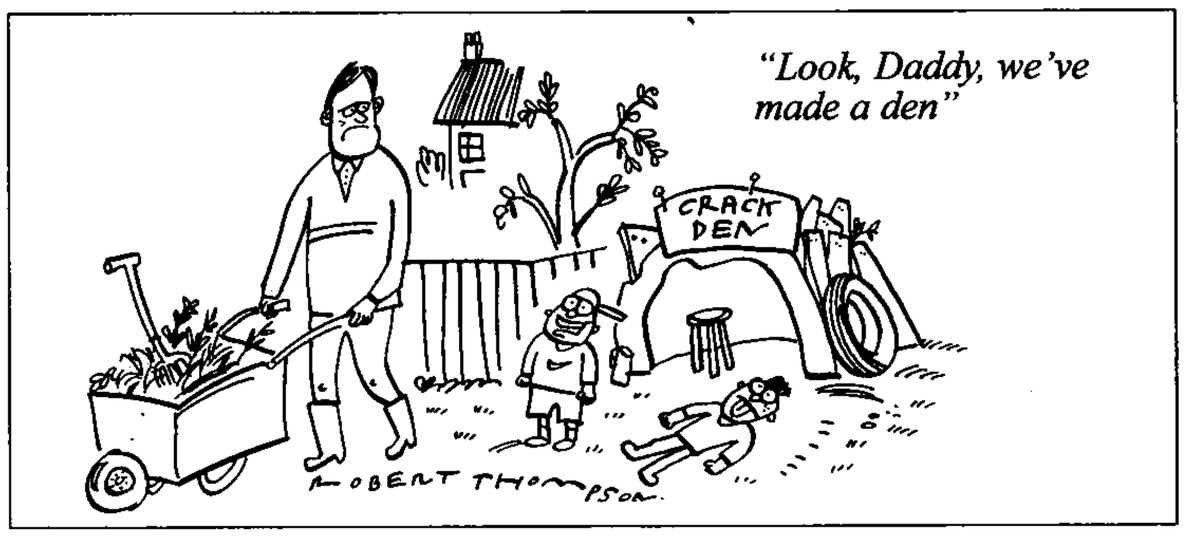
🕮 *Book of the Week*

SPIKE GILLIGAN THE BIOGRAPHY

by John Humphrys-Carpenter

NEW biography of the zany madcap comedian who caused chaos in the lives of everyone with whom he came into contact. The star of the hiliarious 'Today' show who the public viewed as a genius but who was greatly disliked by his colleagues and who ended up feuding with the BBC over the quality of his scripts.

This account goes over familiar territory: Gilligan's early years, his war record, and of course his glory days as the creator of Kelly Seagoon *(That's enough. Ed)* but it does reveal the origin of his nickname 'Spike' given to him by BBC bosses who wished they had done this to his story about *(That really is enough. Ed.)*



"Look, Daddy, we've made a den"

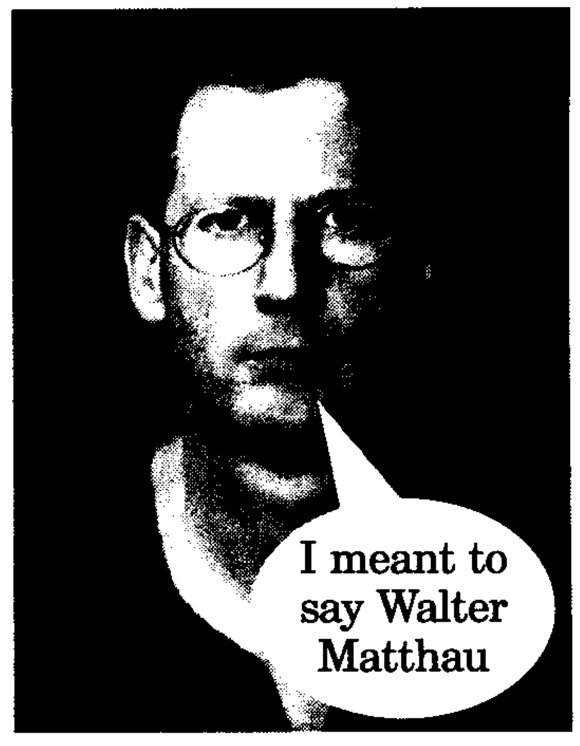
The A.N. Wilson I Knew

by Lady Diana Mosley

TO MANY people these days, my friend Adolf Wislon is a figure of hatred and ridicule. They say that his ideas were mad and dangerous and that I should have renounced him years ago.

But I always found Wiser a delightful man with charming manners. Some of his political views were possibly a little odd, but his love of books and the arts, and above all his sense of humour, made him the perfect companion. I shall never forget, the night after he'd invaded Russia *(cont. p. 94)*

GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN APOLOGISES FOR KELLY SMEAR



Literary Review

A missed target

Yellow Dog
Martin Amis
(Cape, £16.99)

His voluminousness

MART sat in the chair. In the chair sat Mart. The chair where he wrote the words. Where wrote the words he. Outside the window a weird and wolfish wind. Searching for inspiration for his pungent satire on pornography, tabloid newspapers and the Royal Family he glanced, tense and moistly expectant, beyond the window, where a yob Alsatian lolloped past, its tongue dangling over its shoulder like... like a *tentacle*. No, like a *barber's pole*... No, like a *scarf*. That was it. Hang on though, hadn't he done that one in *London Fields*? Humbly his face reared skywards, where in that majestic firmament the vapour trails sauntered like... like *incandescent spermatozoa*. Barely able to believe his luck – that luck, yes sir, Mart had always garnered a fat and fruitful slice of the luck – he put in a call to the agent.

"Here, And. Would you say an aeroplane trail looked like incandescent spermatozoa?"

"Well, a bit. No, a good bit. Listen, I've just fixed this deal with the publishers, right? Anyone releases so much as a page prepublication they get their hands cut off OK?"

"Exclusivity," Mart breathed. "It's what I'm all about."

Porno-tabloid wanker frenzy

There always came this moment, this moment when the men of the *Daily Filth* tried to feel like journalists. It came now as, reclining on his editorial throne, Thurt Beauregard fondly regarded his attentive staff. Dirk Tumour, Zigbid, Dempster, Madeupname and Risible.

"Do we... er, do we have such a thing as a... literary editor?"

"There's Keith Rodent, chief, but he's helping Donna Tampax ghostwrite her autob... her autob... her life-story."

"Never mind that, it's this Martin Amis bloke. Seems his new novel is about, well, *us*."

"I took the liberty, chief, of preparing a think-piece," Dirk Tumour gamely eructed. "Try this."

"OK, so so-called highly-regarded novelist Marty Amis has written a book attacking a much-loved national institution. And no, we don't mean the Royals but the Fourth Estate."

("Our wankers won't know what that means," Thurt Beauregard interjected.)

"The Filth *says: Why not go round and give him a good kicking? All in the spirit of disinterested literary criticism, of course."*

Another chapter title bearing little relation to the text

Sighing impatiently, King Henry IX fitted the final piece of the jigsaw thingy into place and saw the corgi's tremulous rump loom definitively before him. How proud of him Queen Pammy would have been had she ever regained consciousness. Gazing across the dapped lawn he saw, with a frown, the two royal equerries, Mincing and Sodomy, glide towards him [*continues*]

The reckoning

"All right, Cunt, mate," Dirk Tumour breathed stertorously into the hastily fisted mobile, "you was there. You're the witness. What... what happened?"

"Well... " Cunt hardly ever rang Dirk. Dirk usually rang Cunt. But this was out of the ordinary. "Fact. I saw 'im get done. I'm standing outside the Cocked Pinkie with me stash and I see this little bloke sitting over a drink. Reading some paper, too. Might have been the *London Review of Books*, or the *Times Literary Supplement*. Couldn't tell at that distance. Then, all of a sudden, he looks at the page and goes down. I mean *really* down. I fort to myself, that's *telt* him. Fucking *telt* him, that has. I goes over and he's moaning 'Christ, I've gone and copped it this time'. So I take a look, and, you want me to go on Dirk, mate?"

"Sure, Cunt, mate."

"Well they've only gone and written *'a lame and fundamentally misguided satire in which Mr Amis's understanding of the nature of modern society seems finally to have deserted him'* innit? I mean, what would you do?"

"Nemesis," Dirk muttered.

"Nem I wot?"

"He had it coming," Dirk pronounced coldly.

No Candace Do

Trading Up
Candace Bushnell
(Hyperion, £12.99)

FANS of *Sex and the City* will be sorely disappointed if they expect more of the same, or even anything remotely similar, from Candace Bushnell's new book.

The earlier book, her first, was a short, sharp and shocking analysis of the dating scene in New York. Like *Bridget Jones' Diary*, it grew out of a newspaper column (for the *New York Observer*), but it had more sex, better shopping and rather less subtle humour. Written in a gossipy, anecdotal style it certainly had its moments, though you would not have recognised many of them in the TV series, which turned the whole thing into a sitcom.

It was followed by a quartet of stories about, and entitled, *Four Blondes*. Bushnell is, or can be, a stylish writer and she used different styles to suit the different narratives. One of the stories concerned a B-list lingerie model called Janey Wilcox who uses her looks, and sex, to get ahead. Aptly enough, the style adopted for this story was that of the formulaic sex'n'shopping bonkbuster.

One assumed Bushnell was doing this tongue in cheek, to make a point about the kind of character she was dealing with. But it seems she was actually warming up for the big one. *Trading Up* is that big one. Over 500 pages it sequels and prequels the Janey Wilcox story, charting the trials and tribulations of her modelling career from obscure middle class beginnings to Hollywood heights of fame and fortune, or at any rate the match-flare of celebrity.

Janey, now a "famous Victoria's Secret model", is ambitious and cunning, but also vain, stupid and wholly lacking in commonsense. Attempting to make her way in the world, she seduces men and courts disaster. Somehow she manages to turn each disaster into a triumph, yet these triumphs only lead to further and greater disasters. Nor do the socialites, actresses, writers and producers who populate her world come out of the story any better.

All this could be promising if unoriginal material for a biting satire. But Janey is no Becky Sharp and, the nearest we get to *Vanity Fair* is a Hollywood party given by the glossy magazine of that name. The problem is that Bushnell has decided (or been told) to present her narrative in the style of the very thing you would expect her to be sending up to the ceiling.

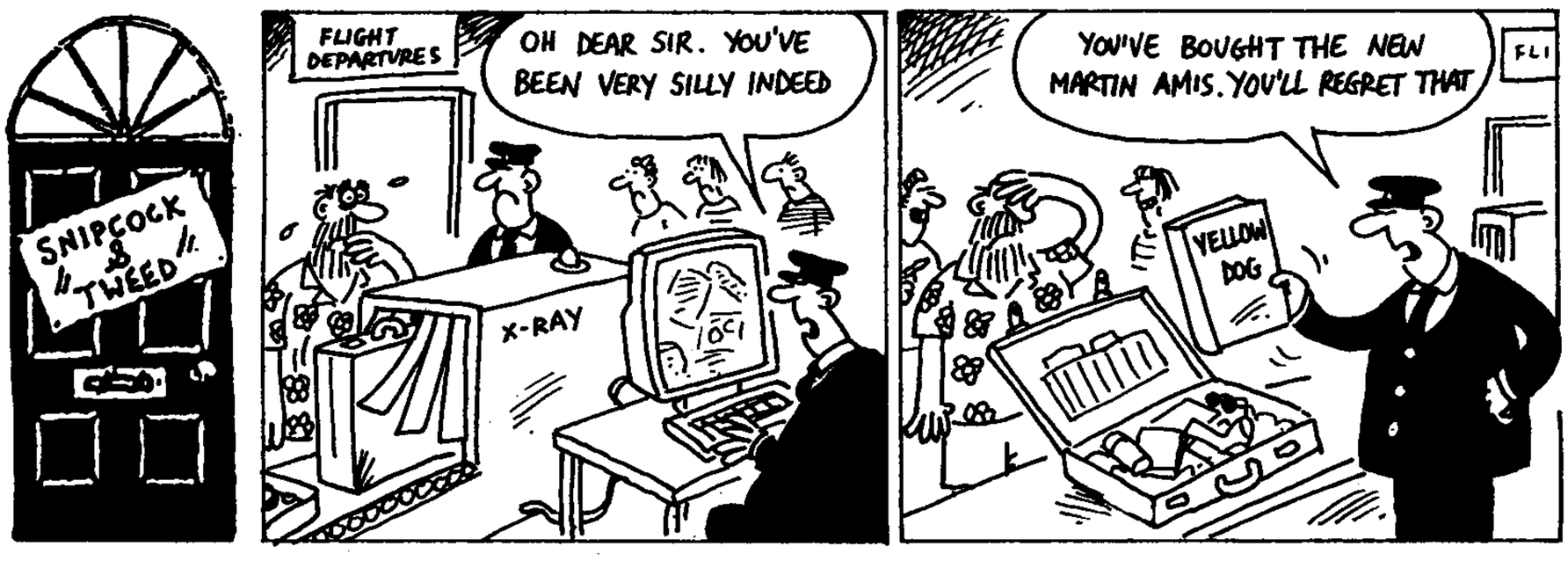
There is none of the gossip-column bitchiness, the whiplash one-liners and knowing insider-dealing of *Sex and the City*. Instead, we enter a world in which English accents are "clipped", parties are "legendary", rich women are "swaddled" in designer clothes, living rooms are "ornately decorated", green fields are "manicured" and traditions are "time-honored". It is full of bland superlatives: X is the "party queen of New York", Y is "the richest man in New York City" and Z is "one of the richest men in the world".

There's plenty of sex, it's true, though not much of it apparently very satisfying. "Despite all the men she'd slept with in the past 15 years, she'd had only six orgasms in her entire life," Janey reflects at one point.

There's also plenty of shopping and here it seems Bushnell's new narrative persona knows the price of everything, from $100,000 for a summer rental in the Hamptons on page 4 down to $150 for a pair of designer underpants on page 43. Other prices given include $2,000 for a handbag on p42; $5,000 for red crocodile boots on p186; $15,000 for an "eighteenth century Chippendale chair" on p278; $20,000 for a set of drapes on p364; and $500,000 for a portrait by "contempary artist Damien Hirst" on p447.

So what do you get for your money? "It was so passé to be stuck in traffic on the way out to the Hamptons, especially if you were a supermodel," thinks Janey, driving her "silver Boxter Porsche convertible" and wearing her "18-karat-gold Bulgari watch". She consoles herself that her pink Chanel sunglasses are the "must-have accessory of the summer". The problem with New York, she decides, is that there was "always someone who was richer, more successful, more famous..."

But Janey has a more serious problem. Comstock Dibble, who despite his facetious name is "one of the most powerful men in the movie business", has paid Janey $30,000 to write a screenplay which she hasn't delivered, and everyone thinks he only paid her for sex. She daren't tell her new husband, Selden Rose, an even more powerful movie producer whose rare 1948 Jaguar XK 120 car "indicated that he had position and money and taste" and who is "as tooth-achingly ambitious as a mouthful of saccharine". Don't laugh. The problem of the missing script is important, by the way, as it proves to be the lynchpin of the whole Hollywood bonanza ending. But you hardly care, frankly, after ploughing through this catalogue and price list.



BANG and awesome deocenter, vgc, inclusive of assorted LP's if wanted, £50 ono. –

Adscene, Ashford

BOOKS & BOOKMAN

■ LAWYERS for Rupert Murdoch's News Corp have been doing their bit for free speech by trying to stop publication of a book by American satirist Al Franken.

Franken's tome about media coverage of the Iraq war, due to be published by Penguin Group imprint Dutton on 22 September, goes by the catchy title of *Lies and the lying liars who tell them: a fair and balanced look at the right*. In a move that is beyond satire, Murdoch's Fox TV in the US has decided to trademark the words "fair and balanced" as a description of Fox's news values and is thus suing Frankel for, er, breach of copyright.

The comedian is grateful for the publicity. The action by the Murdoch's lawyers has catapulted Frankel to the top of the Amazon bestseller list even though the book's not even out yet.

■ HARD times at Simon & Schuster, which saw a massive round of redundancies last month. Things are so bad the company is even dispensing with its receptionist and post room clerk.

Despite the usual claims that the measures are "tough, but necessary", it seems hard to see much logic. Diane Spivey, the long-serving and highly respected rights director, is out. The remaining member of the rights staff now reports to international sales director Jonathan Atkins, who has no expertise in the rights field, while serial rights have passed into the control of the publicity department.

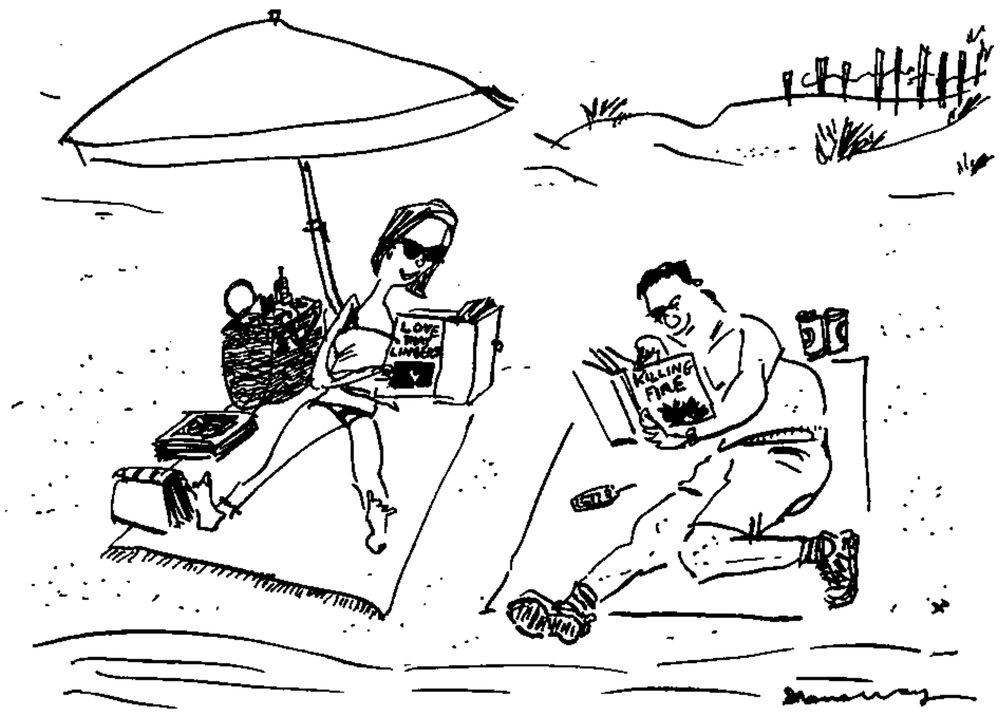
Meanwhile, the company's science fiction imprint Earthlight is no more, its authors having being scattered across the other S&S imprints. Earthlight was supposedly not making enough money, but then neither does the company's upmarket literary colophon, Scribner. Despite this, Scribner boss Ben Ball has been promoted to editorial director, fiction, while Earthlight supremo Darren Nash is out on his ear after only a year with S&S, having been assured when he joined that Earthlight was "100% safe".

The whole process was hamfisted too. On 2 July, 10 members of staff were told by MD Ian Chapman and personnel director Charles Hessey that there was to be a "consultation period" beginning immediately. The redundancies went ahead later in the month, without a moment's consultation. Despite a commitment to treat each leaver "equably", Hessey has suggested to a chosen few that they should "play with a straight bat", the implication being that they might get a little more redundancy money than the statutory minimum of a week's salary for every year of service.

Hessey and Chapman were less euphemistic with the marketing department. Three employees there were told that one of them would be leaving, but Hessey and Chapman avoided deciding which one it was to be — senior marketing manager Susan Holmes — until three weeks later. Chapman then buggered off on holiday before the announcement of the "restructuring" was made.

A couple of weeks later, S&S publisher Suzanne Baboneau announced to the trade press that the new "lean team" will be heading the company's strongest autumn yet. She gives no indication that much of the groundwork for the upcoming bumper season was put in by those who have been sacked.

The beach is the perfect place to backslide on the classics



■ **SO farewell then, Desmond Elliott, pixie-ish Irish-born agent and publisher, who has died in New York at the age of 74.**

The tributes have referred at length to his gentlemanly demeanour, his eccentricity and shrewd stewardship of the careers of writers like Penny Vincenzi and Jilly Cooper. But they didn't really illuminate what he meant when he admitted to his assistant Justin Gowers that "you have to be Machiavelli and Elizabeth Arden rolled into one in this business".

A splendid example of Desmond's Machiavellian side was his willingness to stir things up, if slighted, while all the time attracting no suspicion that he was the source of the fuss. When Jolly Soopah deserted him for Curtis Brown following extensive blandishments from Jonathan Lloyd, Desmond discreetly saw to it that client-poaching by agents became a hot topic of discussion in the trade, to the point of making headlines in the trade press. Quite right too.

'Bookworm'

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The sequel is happy. Eventually the Queen agreed to relieve 'this towne twise afflicted and almost wasted by fire', and the Exchequer reimbursed Quiney for his expenses in London. The Quineys and the Shakespeares continued on cordial terms, Richard's son Thomas marrying Shakespeare's younger daughter, although it was not (as things turned out) a fortunate union."

— From *William Shakespeare – A Documentary Life* by Prof Samuel Schoenbaum, published in 1975.

"The sequel to Quiney's visit was happy. The queen agreed to relieve 'this town twice afflicted and almost wasted by fire' and the government reimbursed Quiney for his expenses on his London trip. The Quineys and the Shakespeares stayed close: Richard's son Thomas would marry William's daughter Judith – although the union was not, as it turned out, a fortunate one."

— From *In Search of Shakespeare* by Michael Wood, published 2003.

Pseuds Corner

Everywhere I have been this summer, I've met people whose professed aim in life is to find a way out of the conceptual crisis created by postmodernism.

CHARLOTTE RAVEN
New Statesman

CUDDEFORD de CLERMONT-TONNERRE – On Wednesday, 23rd July, to HERMINE and ALASTAIR, a daughter, Allegra Marie Rosenius Angel Belle Sydney

***Daily Telegraph* birth announcements**

In my new book *Words and Music*, I accompany Kylie Minogue on a journey she takes through history, driving from the premodern through the modern into the postmodern and beyond. The book is an introduction to an edited history of everything with a soundtrack largely supplied by popular music... At the end of the journey, I say to Kylie, or Kylie says to me: "Some day music will only be air. There will be no objects to hold or fetishise, and people will simply collect lists. No disc, nothing spooled or grooved, no heads to clean, no dust to wipe, no compulsive alphabetising. Nothing to put away in shoeboxes or spare cupboards and be embarrassed about. A chip inside us and inside the chip a route to all the music that there ever was, which we can compile and organise and reorganise and merge with and feel into and in whatever way possible find the time to listen to, and we'll need the time, all the time that music finds the time to press into."

PAUL MORLEY
Guardian

But what really sets her [Janet Street-Porter] apart is the fact that she genuinely doesn't give a flying f*** about what other people think. I watch her eating her asparagus with her fingers, and all I can think is that the world would probably be a more boring place without her.

RACHEL COOKE
Observer

Laqueur then rehearses the usual story of the development of the modern and post-modern western self, relating masturbation variously to the rise of laissez-faire economics, democratic institutions, and the novel...

IAN SANSOM, *Guardian* review of Thomas Laqueur's *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*

Student debt Too much
Design approach Look both ways. Draw. Listen. Touch, Start with the end. Say hello. Learn the tall tales. Write. Respond. Model. Whack. Sink in. Go back. Look again. Get dirty. Kill your darlings. Call someone. Taste. Take stock. Act. Mediate without going the middle way. Respond. Colour while staying in the grey zone. Push. Do not see. Slip. Skip. Be severe. Stay in. Close the inescapable circle.

***Building Design* on 'the UK's top architecture students'**

Stroll around the Campo Santo in Pisa and you cannot help noticing that the novelty gift of the year is a pinafore with *trompe l'oeil* rips revealing a sunburnished and ample pair of breasts bursting from the restraining linen, nipples like exploding *prosecco* corks. In this easy combination of domesticity and breezy eroticism – the functions and lures of kitchen and bedroom united in one evocative garment – there is something ineffably Italian. Something very distant from the prim English separation of life and art, let alone cooking and sex.

STEPHEN BAYLEY
The Independent on Sunday

Pseuds Corporate

Our client is not one type of person. My shoes attract a type of thinker rather than a type of consumer.

GEORGINA GOODMAN, interviewed in *The Times Weekend*

CONTRIBUTORS: Kate Oakley, Margaret George, Paul Jobber, Harvey Cole, Keith Flett, Juliet Blaxland, Strobes, Blaise Hopkinson.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

LOCKERBIE COMPENSATION

2.7 BILLION REASONS TO BE CHEERLESS

THERE may be some naïve readers of the news who think that the Libyan government's payment of $2.7bn to the relatives of the 270 victims of the Lockerbie bombing means that Libya organised the bombing.

Eye readers will be specially perplexed, since the *Eye* has been arguing for many years that Libya had nothing to do with the bombing, and that Abdelbasset Ali Mohamed Al Megrahi, the former Libyan civil servant now languishing in a Scottish prison, was wrongly convicted of the bombing by Scottish judges. If so, why is Libya admitting responsibility for the bombing and paying such a huge amount to its victims?

The long and tortuous negotiations about the money have wrestled with this apparent contradiction. The Libyan government still insists on Megrahi's innocence and has tried to limit its public statements to a bald acceptance of the Scottish court's verdict. Gadaffi's government, however, has been extremely keen to lift the sanctions, imposed by the United Nations and (separately and unilaterally) by the US government.

This is because of the mammoth losses to Libya since sanctions were first imposed in 1991. The Libyan mission in London estimates total losses to its government in the first seven and a half years of sanctions at $30bn. A slightly more sober estimate came in an article for the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs* (May-June 2001) which put the losses to the Libyan exchequer up till the beginning of the century at $18bn, some $2bn a year.

It does not take a sharp mind to see that a one-off payment of $2.7bn – if it succeeds in lifting the sanctions – is a worthwhile investment, and Libya will recoup the money, especially in oil sales, in not much more than a year. Sceptics who find it difficult to believe that any government would fork out such huge compensation for something it never did might like to remember the following facts.

The "star witness" against the two Libyans was recruited by the CIA after he fled his country seeking sanctuary (and enormous sums of money) from the US. His evidence at the trial was a mixture of lies and fantasy so gross that it was rejected by the Scottish court, and one of the Libyan suspects was acquitted.

Megrahi's conviction was based on slender and contradictory circumstantial evidence that convinced many people at the trial (including some of the bereaved families) of his innocence.

In the next two weeks, his lawyers in Scotland will be sending a bulky submission to the Scottish criminal cases review commission, arguing that his conviction should be re-examined on appeal. The submission is backed by Margaret Scott QC, one of Scotland's top criminal lawyers, who describes it as one of the strongest cases she has ever come across.

Matt Berkley, whose brother Alistair died in the bombing, told the *Times* (13 August) that he was refusing to accept any compensation from Libya because he does not believe there is any "credible evidence" that Libya was to blame.

The case is examined in detail in the *Eye* pamphlet *Lockerbie: The Flight from Justice*. A few copies are still available.

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE

SHOTS IN THE DARK

AFTER Richard Watson, a successful computer businessman, was shot dead by a gunman outside his East Grinstead home in December 1996, his widow Linda and her daughter Amanda London-Williams endured 18 months of torment thanks to Sussex police.

Mr Watson was due to give evidence against a man who was accused of robbery at his business premises and had already been the victim of a "warning" stun gun attack. Nevertheless Sussex police focused all their attention on the two bereaved women. They were treated as suspects from the start, their house was bugged, they were publicly arrested in humiliating circumstances, thrown into Holloway jail for two weeks, vilified in the tabloids and charged with murder.

For more than a year they were forced to live apart from each other and their families because police claimed they might interfere with witnesses. Then, on the last working day before their case was due to go to trial, defence lawyers received a two-line fax saying the Crown would offer no evidence against them.

A subsequent damning police complaints authority (PCA) report into the affair identified "a systemic failure by Sussex police" to properly investigate the murder, with the main responsibility resting with the senior investigating officer, Det Supt Paul Westwood. He had refused to cooperate with the Metropolitan police who were conducting the inquiry on behalf of the PCA, but because he had by then retired, no disciplinary action could be taken against him for the catalogue of errors.

Among the most serious was a "poor response" to the women's emergency call, delay in getting to the scene, allowing large numbers of people to walk all over the crime scene leading to the loss of potential forensic evidence, and errors in the way evidence was handled.

Other lines of inquiry, including the previous stun gun attack and the man against whom Mr Watson was to give evidence, "were not adequately pursued" and the officers "failed to keep an open mind". The PCA's main recommendation was that the murder should be reinvestigated.

Last year DCI Steve Dennis wrote on behalf of Sussex police to the two women's solicitor, Lawrence Kormornick, offering an unreserved apology for the "systemic failure of the policies and resourcing criteria that existed at the time" and underlining the two women's innocence. Both women have also received an interim payment of £25,000 compensation from the home office over their wrongful arrest and treatment, with a final settlement expected later this year.

They were assured that Sussex police were committed to bringing Mr Watson's killer to justice. Except that they have just announced they have completed the reinvestigation, and the crown prosecution service will not be taking action against the real prime suspect – the man against whom Mr Watson was to testify. He is serving a 17-year sentence for a subsequent shotgun attack which left his victim permanently disabled.

The man, who was first arrested within two hours of the Watson murder, when he was in the bath and his clothes were in the washing-machine, had previous convictions for shotgun offences. Linda Watson told the *Eye* she had been informed that there are now six witnesses who could have provided evidence against him. "If Sussex police had investigated this crime properly in the first place instead of pursuing us, it is possible that this man would have been stopped before he shot someone else."

DUDS OF MAY

LAST MONTH 58-year-old Susan May, who is serving a life sentence for the murder of her aunt – a crime of which most people and a delegation of 50 MPs believe she is innocent – was required to provide a second DNA sample for the national database.

Mrs May, whose case is again before the criminal cases review commission, tried to argue that as a wrongly convicted women she should not have to provide a sample – but she complied anyway.

She had been asked to supply a second sample because her first had "failed". According to the home office information sheet to prisoners, one of the key reasons so many samples fail is if they are received in "an improperly sealed bag". May believes this to be of vital interest.

There were two key exhibits in her own case: one, in a sealed bag, tested negative for her aunt's blood; the other, in a strangely unsealed bag, tested positive. It was on this evidence that May was convicted and lost two appeals, despite a raft of evidence suggesting a burglary and the presence of a stranger in the house.

She now realises that the only evidence on which she has been convicted would, on its own admission, not meet current home office standards.

STOCK LOSSES

A STRIKING feature of the serial injustices of the 1970s and 1980s has been the sustained attempts of senior judges to uphold them on appeal. A good example is the continuing case of Anthony Stock of Llandrindod Wells, reported in full in the Eye seven years ago – on 18 October 1996 (909).

Mr Stock was arrested and convicted 33 years ago of a robbery at a Tesco store in Leeds. Bitterly protesting his innocence, he was sent to prison for 10 years. He lost one appeal, went on hunger strike for three months, was released in 1975 and has not been in any trouble since.

Not so his chief police investigator, Det Sgt Mather, who was obliged to resign from the police rather than face 90 disciplinary charges mainly for referring prisoners to the same solicitor.

In 1978 a supergrass, Samuel Benefield, told police he had taken part with other criminals in the Tesco robbery, and described in meticulous detail how and where the robbery had occurred. He named his fellow-robbers, who did not include Mr Stock.

Stock's case was referred to the court of appeal, where, despite overwhelming evidence of his innocence, his appeal was dismissed. The judgment (on 15 July 1996) was read out by Lord Justice Judge, former prosecuting counsel of the Birmingham Six (cleared in 1991) and the Bridgewater Four (cleared in 1997) and systematically promoted afterwards.

Mr Stock took his case to the new criminal cases review commission. Seven years later, the commission has now referred it back to the court of appeal. Their long and devastating report disposes of what is left of the identification evidence against Mr Stock and in several crucial respects backs up Samuel Benefield's story of how the robbery really took place.

Among the many examples of police malpractice exposed in the report is the revelation that the chief witness who identified Stock, described in the previous appeal judgment as "an honest witness", who, according to a report to the court by a police superintendent, had "no criminal convictions recorded against him", had two criminal convictions, one for drunk driving without insurance, the other for receiving stolen property.

The case, a monument to the law's delays and the insolence of judicial office, will come to the court of appeal some time in the next 33 years.

TAX AVOIDANCE

FALLEN ANGEL

THE business career of Desmond Taljaard glitters with triumphs. He was trained as an accountant at Ernst & Young before he became head of the property division at Ladbrokes and at the Hilton hotel group, which boasts: "Our internal codes of practice require professionalism, integrity and honesty in all that we do."

Desmond Taljaard

It was not long before Mr Taljaard was presented with a ticklish problem. Many properties bought by the Ladbroke/Hilton group as investments had ended up making losses. There was no tax relief on these buildings because they had been bought as investments. So a new firm was created – New Angel Court Ltd – and all the buildings transferred to it. The object was to make it appear that the buildings were part of a trading operation, and therefore liable for some £20m tax relief on their losses.

The special tax commissioners did not agree. In December last year they refused the relief, and described the company's documents about the transaction as "window dressing". They also denounced as "prevarication" the evidence of Mr Taljaard, whose identity for some reason was not published in their report. The Hilton group appealed to the high court, where, last month, Mr Justice Lawrence Collins upheld the commissioners' view. He said the deal was "deliberately dressed up as a commercial transaction by documents based on information contrary to the facts", and confirmed the commissioners' hostile view of Mr Taljaard, whom he named.

By this time, however, Mr Taljaard had been promoted. In March, just two months after being denounced as a prevaricator by the tax commissioners, he went on to the board of the supermarket chain Sainsbury's, as head of its £4.5bn property division. Sir Peter Davis, Sainsbury's chairman, could not contain his enthusiasm for the appointment. "I am delighted," he said, "to welcome Desmond to Sainsbury's where his previous experience in a customer-focused environment will be of immense value to us."

BUS SAFETY

DENNIS THE MENACE

YET another Dennis Dart bus has gone out of control and ploughed into a queue of passengers (see *Eyes passim*).

Iris Sawyer, 71, of Furzefield, West Green, near Crawley in West Sussex, was killed outright. Her friend Rosemary Padley, 80, suffered a fractured pelvis and a broken arm. The driver of the bus, James Broderick, insisted on giving a statement to the inquest at Haywards Heath on 18 July: "I was literally standing on the brake to try to stop the bus colliding with the kerb," he said.

He said he went on applying the brake without any effect while he watched people disappearing, screaming, under the bus. He also said he had evidence of 80 other incidents where a Dennis Dart bus had gone out of control in similar circumstances.

A barrister for Metrobus said no previous similar faults on the bus had been reported by Mr Broderick.

A spokesman for Transbus International, which makes Dennis Darts, told the local paper: "There is absolutely no evidence that this vehicle has operational problems. We have 100 percent confidence in this product."

Graham Stephenson, national bus officer for the Transport & General Workers Union, told the *Eye*: "We have been hearing of these sudden surges in these buses for 10 or 11 years now. When our members get into trouble after these incidents, they get in touch with us and we send them our dossier on about 70 previous cases. This is usually enough to stave off disciplinary proceedings or even prosecutions."

The *Eye*'s reports of previous cases in Sunderland, High Wycombe, Birmingham and Bristol can be found in issues 998 and 1003.

THE TALES OF HOVE MAN

AN ATTEMPT to open a lap dancing club in Hove, of all places, has made residents of Brighton's more sedate neighbour choke over their *Daily Telegraphs*.

Addressing a meeting of residents, Maarten Hoffmann, managing director of Colmaart, the company behind the scheme, said it would all be in the best possible taste. According to a report in the Brighton *Argus*, he confirmed that lap dancing was planned but it would be a sophisticated "Moulin Rouge" atmosphere.

Hoffman, 46, had other reassurances: he was a former BBC director of 17 years' experience, he said, and a BBC costume designer, choreographer and lighting director would all be involved in setting the tone of the venue. Sadly not everyone was impressed. One local man said Hoffmann had done "a good PR job" but "we don't trust you".

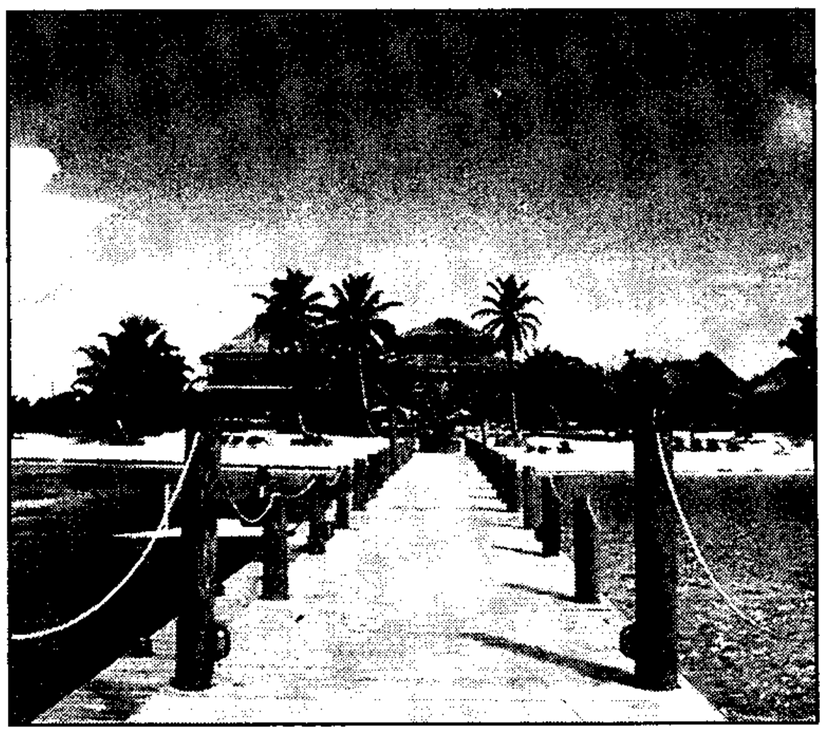
Permission for the club – recommended by planning officers – was turned down last month by councillors. But Colmaart is appealing and resubmitting its application, this time for a members-only venue. Would residents have more confidence had Hoffmann been more forthcoming about his career?

Until 2002 he was living in agreeable San Pedro in Belize, a swaying palms and white sands sort of place where he was involved in setting up a luxury beach resort called Portofino with two Belgians, Jan van Noord and Jacques Moretus.

Alas the three fell out over money and Hoffmann left the country. "We parted on bad terms," Van Noord told the *Eye* last week. "We are missing $250,000, and have filed claims against him, although Maarten will tell you this was money he spent on behalf of the company. He came between us. Maarten is a very slick and quick talker, but he leaves a trail of devastation everywhere. I'm very happy he has gone and he'll not be coming back to Belize, and so are a lot of other people."

Another former colleague of Hoffmann's, who was unwilling to be named, told the *Eye*: "Maarten has a very good mouth on him, but he's his own worst enemy. He gets money off people then disappears, causing a lot of misery when his schemes collapse. He is a particularly undesirable person and I hope I never, ever, see him again in my life."

Several people *are* keen to hear from Hoffmann, however. In 1997 they took out shares at £3,500 a piece in Planet Submarine (PSM), a diving timeshare scheme set up by Hoffmann. They expected to receive discounted diving and accommodation at resorts in exotic locations such as Egypt, Honduras and Belize. Alas, three years on none of the investors had seen any benefits, nor had they heard from Hoffmann.



Belize: Hoffmann's home from Hove

After *Diver* magazine ran a story about Planet Submarine in September 2000 it received an outraged email from "Otto Bond", president of "Planet Submarine Inc", who said his "corporation" had taken over the project and it was still on track, but of course anyone who wanted their money back could have it.

Two months later, however, Maarten Hoffmann was the company's spokesman again. He explained that an extraordinary series of disasters had overtaken all of Planet Submarine's ventures. He told *Diver* that the Egypt diving centre had been foiled by the Luxor massacre; a second one in Eritrea had been halted by war and work on three resorts in Honduras and Belize had been wrecked by hurricanes.

Estimates of how many "investors" there were in Planet Submarine vary – Hoffmann once gave the figure of 194. Last week the *Eye* spoke to bank officer Perry Stimpson of London, who with his former partner Anitta Koskinen applied to buy three shares in PSM at £3,500 each – total £10,500.

After putting in a first payment of £3,500 Stimpson and Koskinen smelled a rat "because of a lack of communication" and did not pay the rest. They asked for their money back, but it has never been returned. Stimpson told the *Eye*: "Progress [claimed Hoffmann] was halted due to a hurricane in Belize… I called several dive operators in Belize and was informed that damage was minimal. None had heard of Hoffmann or PSM. When approached Hoffmann simply did not reply to any of my emails. Another investor who mounted a campaign to get some compensation or at least a breakdown of PSM dealings was met with insults and threats of legal action." Other PSM investors tell similar stories.

Hoffmann's CV is an entertaining mix of fact and fiction. It says he attended the Italia Conti stage school in London in the 1970s (true) and left with some eight A-levels (improbable anyway, and untrue because students were not able to sit A levels at Italia Conti until recently).

It claims Hoffmann had a glittering career as a director of light entertainment at the BBC and London Weekend Television before leaving to set up his own production company which won the "Palme d'Or" award for "best programme" at the Montreux television festival in 1986. There is no such award at the Montreux festival – though there is at the Cannes film festival.

The BBC refuses to answer questions about former employees, genuine or not, but the LWT press office was unable to find anyone who remembered a big cheese director called Maarten Hoffmann.

The *Eye* has made several requests to Hoffmann requesting an interview, so far to no avail.

At least no hurricanes or civil wars are forecast for Hove.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

SCOTLAND Yard is investigating a second allegation of jury "nobbling" involving the third trial on a theft charge of failed Co-operative Wholesale Society bidder Andrew Regan after a juror reported that he had been offered £40,000.

This follows an earlier police investigation when the second trial had to be abandoned in January after a juror publicly announced that he had been approached, this time with an offer of £10,000. That offer was reportedly made by an unknown man who came to the juror's home. The mystery man has not been traced.

At Regan's third trial – the jury could not agree at the first last year – the juror was discharged after privately informing court officials of the offer, £20,000 up front and £20,000 after a not-guilty verdict. The approach was made despite the fact that the jury had been placed under 24-hour police protection. It was reportedly made to the juror by a neighbour.

Police sources emphasise it is not possible to prevent such approaches unless officers are stationed inside jurors' homes or at the front door and their telephones are monitored – measures considered too intrusive.

Undoubtedly these incidents came as a complete and unwelcome surprise to Andrew Regan and his advisers. There is no evidence to link them to the allegations of jury "nobbling".

The remaining 11 jurors at Snaresbrook crown court in north-east London subsequently acquitted Regan two weeks ago of stealing £2.4m from his food company Hobson. The money was used to pay £1m each to two CWS executives in 1995 to extend a £5000m-a-year supply contract to Hobson.

Allan Green and David Chambers were convicted of corruption last year at Regan's first trial and jailed for three and a half years each. Regan – who did not give evidence – denied knowing of or authorising the corrupt payments. He accused intermediary Ronald Zimet, who gave evidence against him after being guaranteed immunity from prosecution by the Serious Farce Office of arranging the pay-offs. Regan denied he had paid Zimet to bribe Green and Chambers to extend the supply contract for Hobson.

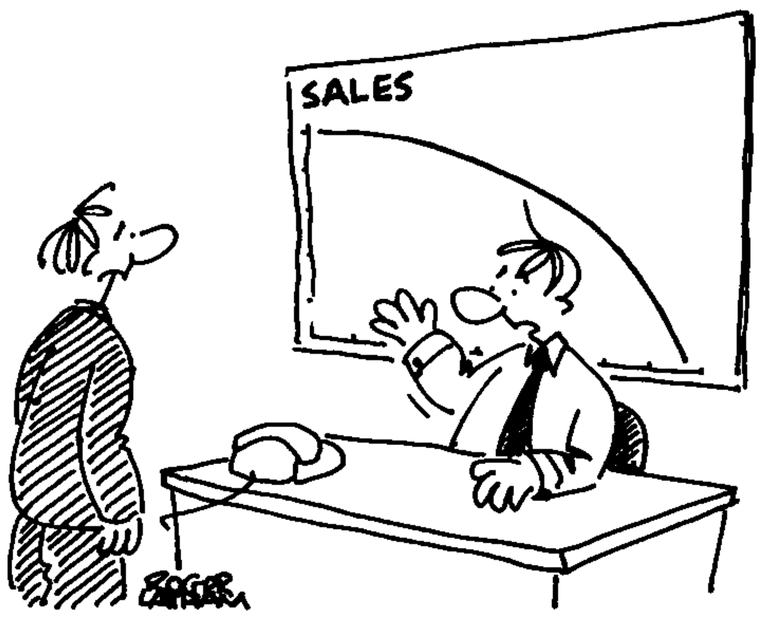
Two years after Green and Chambers were paid £2m by Zimet, Green was secretly filmed handing over CWS documents to Regan in a hotel car park. Regan was planning a subsequently abandoned £1.6bn bid for the CWS.

Police are now investigating whether other jurors were approached but did not report any bribe they were offered. Also part of the police investigation is whether a corrupt court official has provided personal details about the jurors including their addresses. The investigation was requested by Judge David Radford after he rejected the application by the SFO to stop the trial and appoint a fourth jury. The bill for the Regan trials including his costs could be as much as £7m.

Obtaining evidence in jury "nobbling" cases is notoriously difficult. Those identified can either deny making the offer or explain it away as a joke – the response of the intermediary said to have approached one of the jurors in the Guinness trial.

Jury protection is a highly expensive operation. It involves providing as many as 75 officers to give round-the-clock protection to the 12 jurors. Unlike the US system which requires unanimous verdicts and so only one juror has to be "bought", past experience shows that in British cases those looking to corrupt a jury cast their net much wider looking to reach a minimum of three jurors to ensure that at least no verdict can be returned.

Regan's acquittal brought to an end a sorry saga for the SFO which had its origins in a fateful



"It's no surprise to me, everyone's been team-building, group-bonding, on away days, courses, doing audit trails, health and bloody safety – nobody's done any work!"

and probably wrong decision made three years ago to accept a deal which avoided seeking to extradite the businessman from Monaco.

The SFO decided, supported by legal advice, to charge Regan with theft to avoid the problems from seeking to extradite him on corruption charges. The ancient extradition treaty with Monaco did not include corruption. There were also questions about whether Regan could have been extradited from France, if arrested there, but this was less certain and Regan would have remained in jail while the legal debate raged.

The tactical mistake the SFO made was to reject the alternative of "imprisoning" Regan in the tiny enclave of Monte Carlo under threat of arrest the moment he stepped into France as a lever to force him back to Britain to face trial with CWS executives Green and Chambers who had been charged in 1999.

Instead the SFO accepted Regan's offer of a voluntary return to face a theft charge. While clearly viable in law – an attempt to throw out the charge on legal grounds was rejected – this concept (of stealing from the company for its own benefit) was always going to be difficult for a jury in comparison with a more simple charge of corruption.

By a not remarkable coincidence, that decision was in part made by none other than Fred Coford, the then SFO case controller, who also played key roles in two other inglorious SFO setbacks: the plea bargain deal with Roger Levitt in 1993 and the failed Wickes prosecution last year. Both the Wickes and Regan cases came to trial long after Coford had left the SFO for a new career in private practice.

ONE of the most intriguing aspects of Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich buying just over 50 percent of Chelsea Village from eight supposedly independent offshore shareholders plus chairman Ken Bates is how the proceeds in all but one case came to be sent to the same bank account. That account turns out to be the client account at the Co-Operative Bank in Manchester of Mark Taylor & Co which acted for all but one of the sellers.

But then Mark Taylor has been a director of Chelsea Village since 1996. And his firm has its offices at the premiership club's Stamford Bridge ground. Not surprising as it acts for Chelsea Village, as does the Co-Op Bank.

By no doubt a further coincidence the agreements for six of the seven offshore companies (including Bates' BVI company) to sell appear to have been signed by the same two individuals even though the companies are registered in the British Virgin Islands, Samoa, Mauritius, the Cook Islands and Cyprus.

But then the signatories appear to be linked to Chelsea director and Bates associate Patrick Murrin in Guernsey, whose unidentified clients acquired the balance of the largest 26 percent shareholding in Chelsea Village last year after Bates increased his stake to the maximum 29 percent permitted without a bid. Murrin had also previously represented the offshore trust which owned that 26 percent stake.

No doubt the Financial Services Authority is probing all these remarkable coincidences to discover whether indeed "the publicly-disclosed shareholdings of certain parties may have been accurate".

SUGGESTIONS that Roman Abramovich owns his Russian empire through the British company Millhouse Capital UK appear wide of the mark judging by the recently filed Millhouse accounts. Millhouse is often described as "owning" 92 percent of the oil group Sibneft, 50 percent of Russian Aluminium and other insurance and pharmaceutical interests, plus formerly 26 percent of the Aeroflot airline sold this year for $130m. These assets have been valued at up to $5b.

But Millhouse Capital has filed abbreviated accounts under the exemption for "small" companies! It lists assets of less than £500,000.

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

MEGACORP
FACTORY 37/A
THERE ARE NO EUROZONE RIGIDITIES HERE - WE HAVE - LABOUR AND FISCAL COMPETITVENESS...
YEAH - WE DO AS WE'RE TOLD...
BREAK OVER! BACK TO WORK!
...AND SIR JULIAN DOESN'T PAY ANY TAX!
149

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

A footnote to her current 'comeback tour'

Winners and losers so far at lastminute.com

The explanation is likely to be that Millhouse does not own but "manages" the Sibneft and RusAl stakes. These are either owned for tax reasons in Cyprus, like Millhouse itself, or in the BVI, like Chelsea.

While Abramovich has so far avoided the legal problems of fellow oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, whose Yukos oil major is merging with Sibneft, that is not to say the Russian authorities have no interest in his associates. The Moscow prosecutor-general's office last month reopened an investigation into how the insurance group Ingosstrakh was acquired by Oleg Deripaska – Abramovich's partner in RusAl – in 2001. A Russian businessmen Andrei Andreyev says he owns the controlling stake in the insurance company and other companies sold without his consent. Millhouse became a shareholder in one of these companies.

In April Russian investigators raided the offices of RusAl and Deripaska's company, Base Element. Deripaska has so far been denied a US visa. It is understood this is because of the suspected involvement in RusAl of Mikhail Chernoy, identified by US and Israeli authorities as having links to Russian organised crime. Chernoy denies these allegations and has faced no charges.

Abramovich is said to be looking to unload his 50 percent of RusAl which, after the Aeroflot sale, the Sibneft merger and the Chelsea purchase has encouraged speculation in Moscow that he would like to have his money outside Russia before the political climate changes with elections due in December and next year.

FOLLOWERS of British Airways were amused to see the important role played by Mervyn Walker, as operations director at Heathrow, in the recent check-in dispute which is expected to cost the airline at least £40m in lost revenue.

They recall that in his previous role as legal director 10 years ago Walker also featured in another expensive BA PR disaster – the "dirty tricks" campaign against rival Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic. BA apologised to Branson for allegations made by its employees which were "wholly untrue" and paid £610,000 in libel damages a year after Walker had described Branson's claims as "unfounded".

The Branson fiasco was said to have cost BA £3m in legal fees.

FOLLOWERS of longtime *Eye* favourite Paul Levinson will not be at all surprised to see the chaos at leisurewear company Hay & Robertson whose shares were suspended in March and where the entire board resigned last week.

The suspension was triggered by the appointment of receivers at two subsidiaries. Levinson's son Mark was the largest shareholder in H & R. With associate Glyn Hirsch he was on the board. Levinson father and son last featured when their cheapo CD distributor Tring International collapsed five years ago. Before that Levinson senior had featured in a series of – for others – stock market disasters.

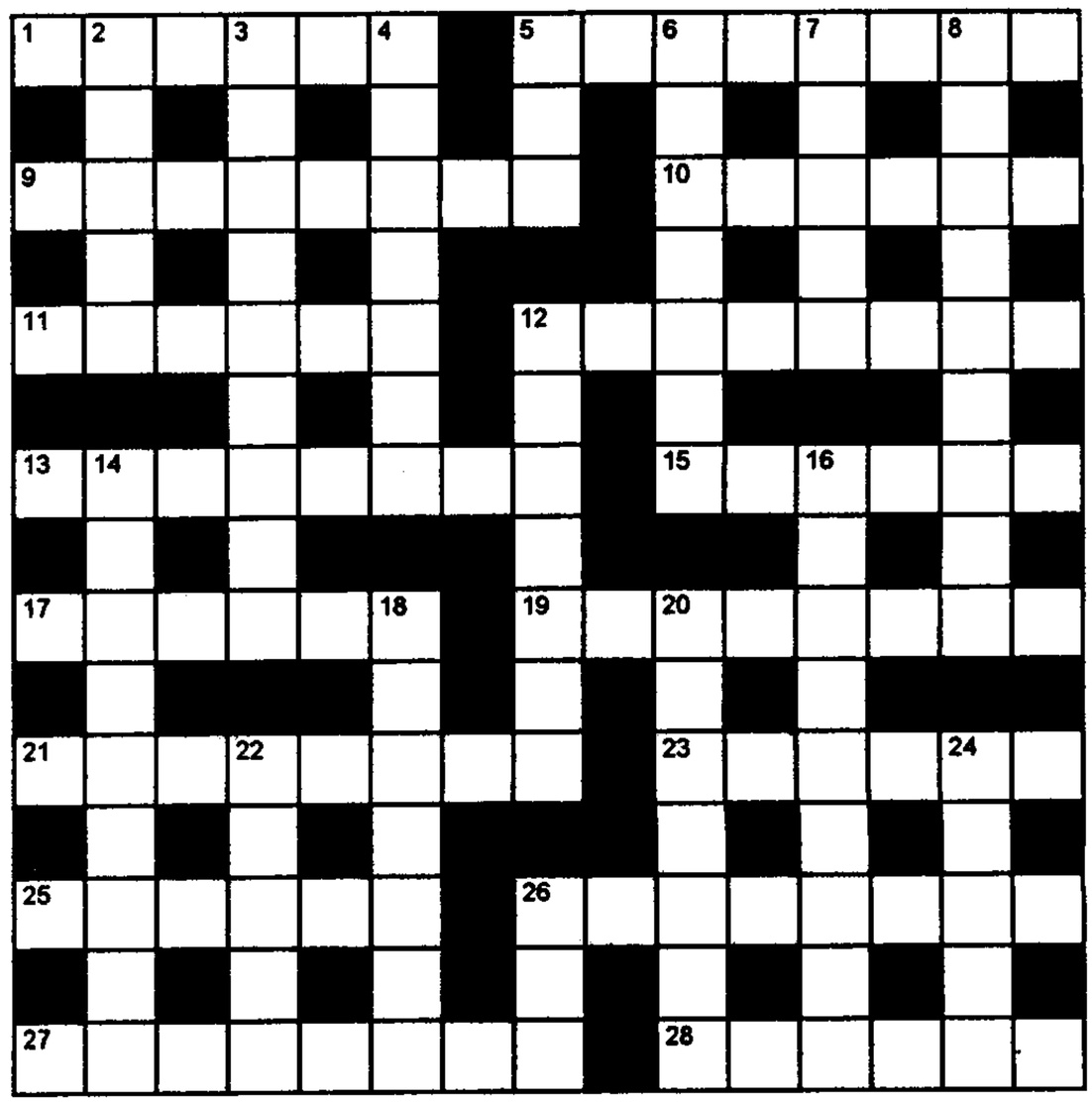
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 242

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 29 August 2003.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Piss about with substitute Eye (6)
5 Perverse American copies drunken bums and dies (8)
9 Bell's out (long gone), about to nick someone else's piece – that's to be a hack (8)
10 Oprah outburst at end of transmission: "Kill mom and dad!" (6)
11 Disagree on going topless, giving the full monty (3-3)
12 Injured a groin? No good making sexy noises (8)
13 It'll come as no shock to its victims (8)
15 Leader reported "Eff you, Royal Highness arsy-versy Brenda!" (6)
17 Discussions of this country go with a bang? (6)
19 Relapse into sin? Not Labour's leader, the arse! (8)
21 Top shelf screwing in strip club? (5,3)
23 Cyclops in Pyrex-dished death (6)
25 Emasculated religious adherent gobbles English breakfast? (6)
26 Convicted tax dodger gives head inside lacking company (2,6)
27 Drove home more than half pissed after rest collapsed (8)
28 Shy Brenda? Bull! (6)

DOWN

2 Be better to flog said old flame first? (5)
3 Unidentified correspondent gets piss-pot, pisspoor pension (6,3)
4 Mug on old jerk like a Dalek (7)
5/12/26/24 "Ungenuine bastard!" – small British crooked firm of greedy, silky representatives (3,7,3,5)
6 Calm down leader of Conservatives – stupid fool without ministry backing (4,3)
7 *Sun*: "Topless Peg – Free!" (5)
8 No intellectual but will make large organ stiff (5-4)
12 See 5dn.
14 It'll age us terribly, such action! (5,4)
16 Stockings fastened to organ feature facilitate passing of water (9)
18 Gold knockers put upon foreign residential placements? (2,5)
20 Barnet a bit spiky with sailors wanting a slash (4,3)
22 Girl is over being grabbed by MacGregor (5)
24 See 5dn.
26 See 5dn.

Crossword 241 winner: GORDON STONER

ACROSS: 1 Pubic 4 Signing up 9 Argentina 10 Donor 11 Connery 12 Slag off 13 Psychobabble 18 Bullshitting 21 Inertia 23 Jousted 24 Gee up 25 Town-crier 26 Disgraced 27 Rigid.

DOWN: 1 Prance 2 Begins 3 Consensus 4 Slimy 5 G'day sport 6 India 7 Gun lobby 8 Purified 14 Climactic 15 Announcer 16 Abridged 17 Clueless 19 String 20 Adored 22 Toper 23 Jawed.

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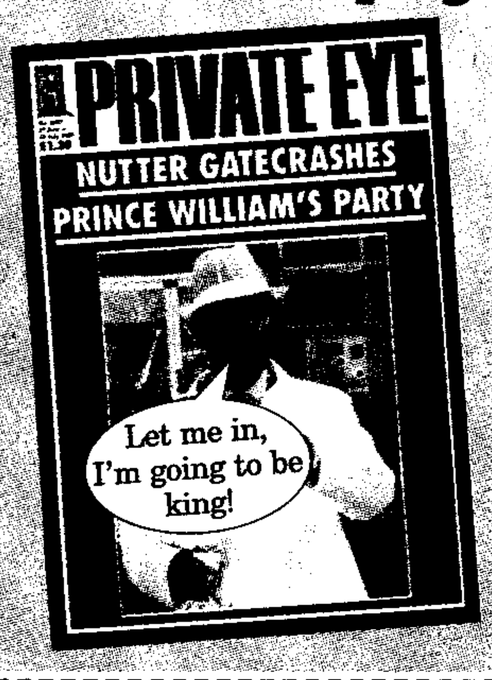

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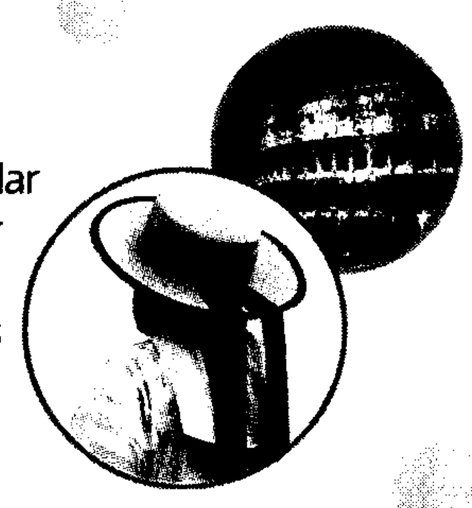

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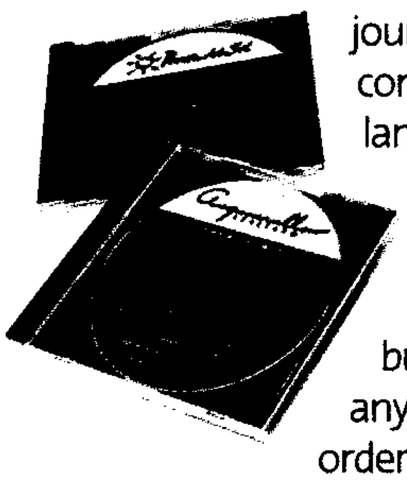

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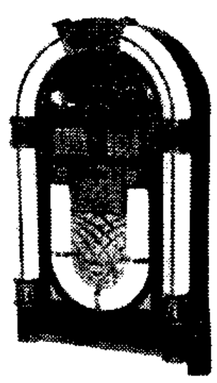

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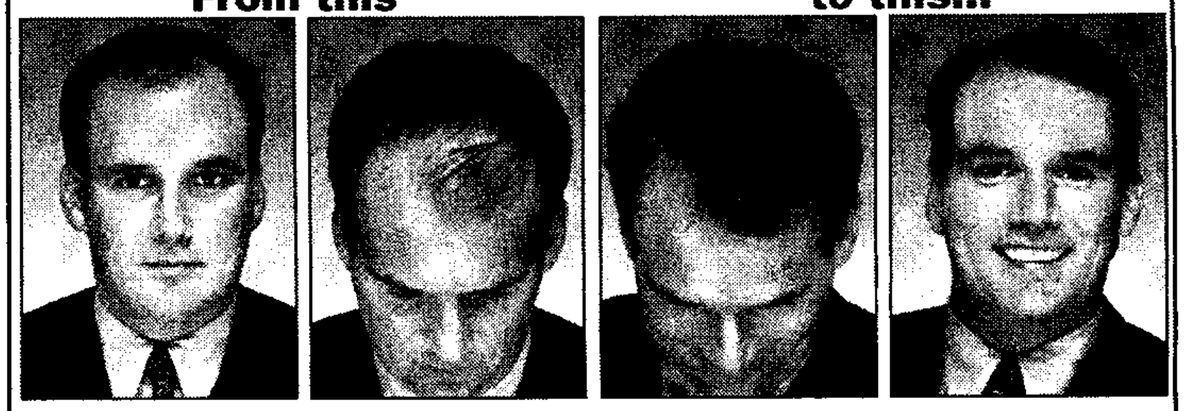

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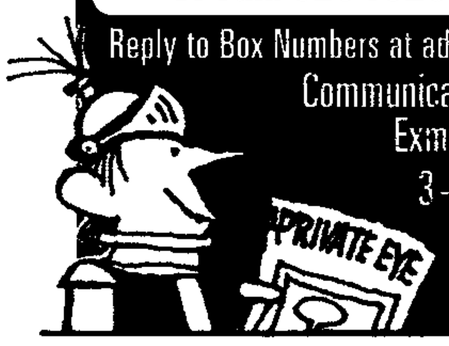

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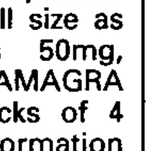

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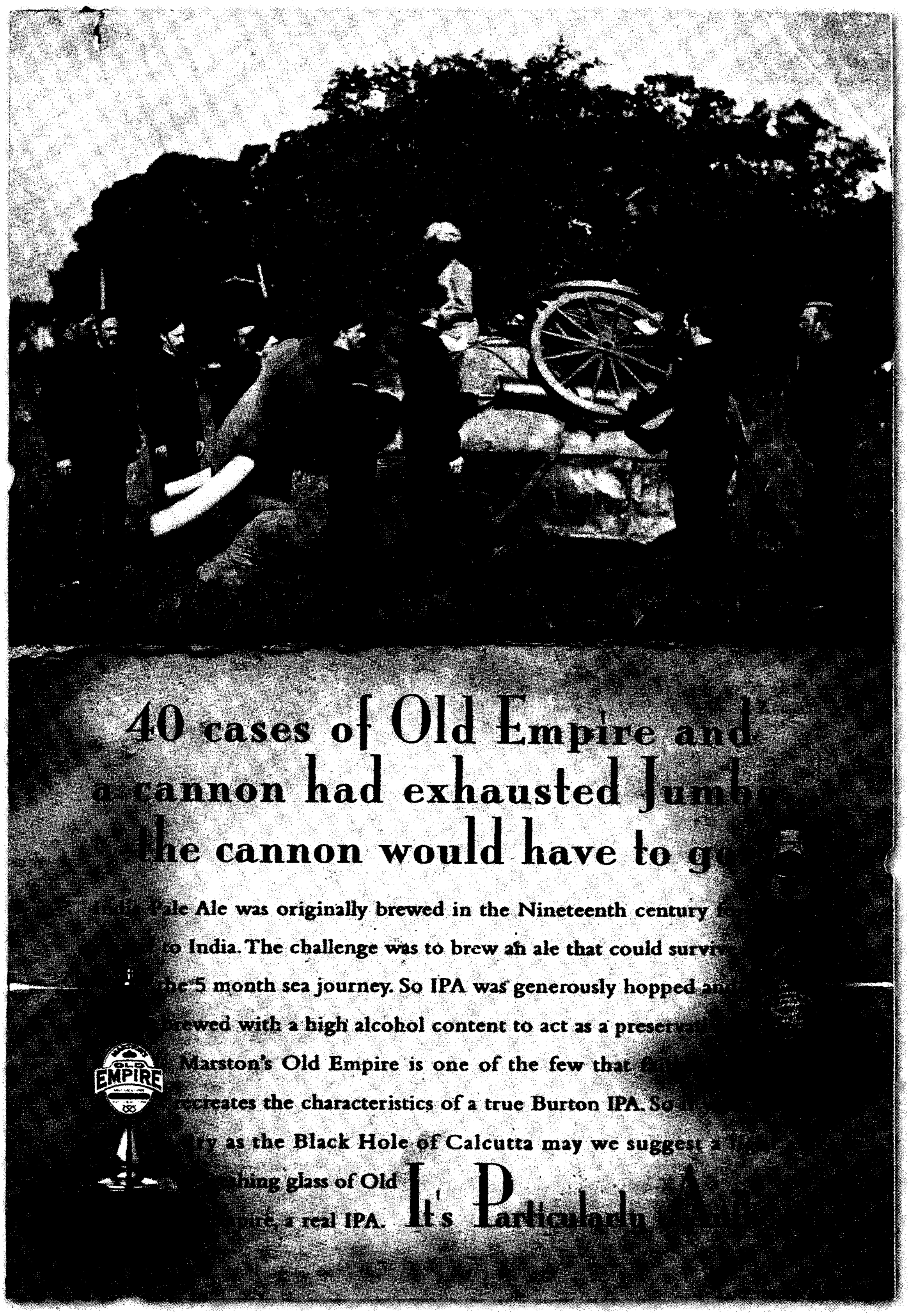
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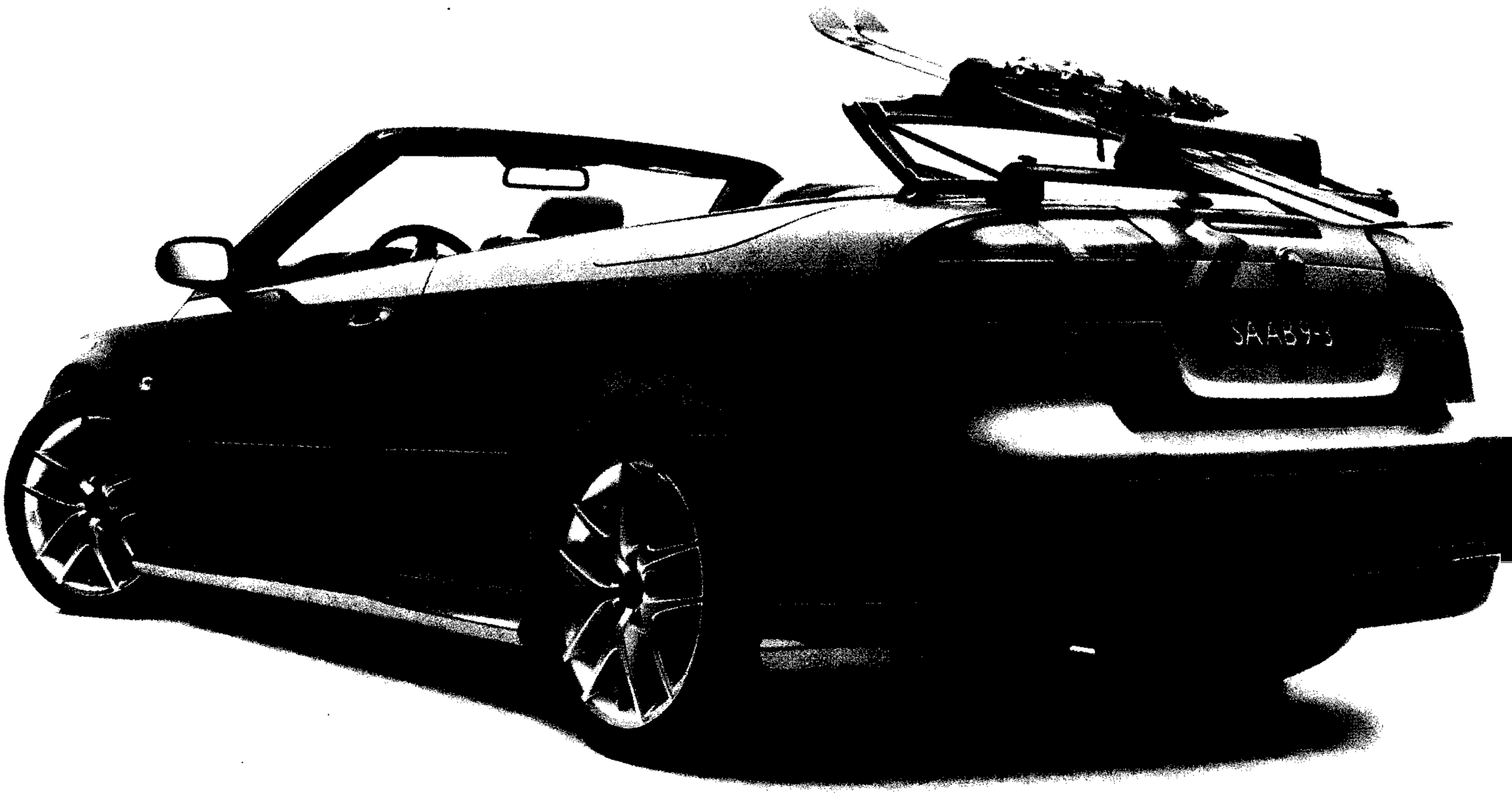

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